

The
Very Little
Person



Mary Heaton Vorse

O.P.
Sent to R.R.L. Feb. 1927

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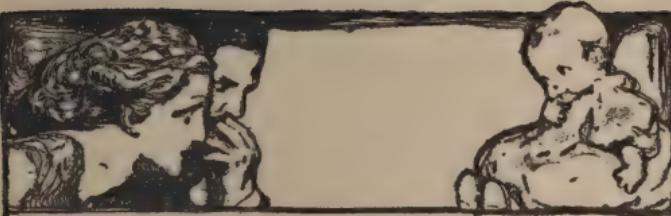
THE VERY LITTLE PERSON. Illustrated.
THE BREAKING IN OF A YACHTSMAN'S
WIFE. Illustrated.

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The Very Little Person





The Very Little Person

BY

Mary Heaton Vorse

*With Illustrations by
Rose O'Neill*

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From drawings by Rose O’Neill

Courtesy of “ Woman’s Home Companion ”

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I

MR. GREATRAX'S BABY

IF John Greatrax had not been a rather commonplace man his emotions about the birth of his child would not have been recorded here. But John went to work at his office every morning, just as his hundred clerks and fifty superior officers in the company and all the fellow voters that he knew went to work. He was rather proud of his head for organization, which had won him the place of office manager. It should be said of him that he was a little inclined to carry his office air of decidedness and consciousness of infallibility into his own home — but that was before the baby came. It was not that John found fault with the housekeeping, for Constance organized her house so

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smoothly that John did not know that house-keeping needed organization. Sometimes he talked to her about his difficulties with his clerks, but she never brought up counter statements relating to difficulties of domestic service. John read about these in the comic papers, but they never came near his daily life, and for that reason he considered the comic papers tiresome.

“All you need is good temper to be a good housekeeper,” he was accustomed to say. “Look at Constance.”

Constance had a good temper, and their little baby, Louise, of course was an angel — but she has n’t yet come into the story. John had read about babies, too, in the comic papers, but he had always considered jokes about them in rather bad taste, and travesties of anything in real life. That his own life, in habits or thought, could be changed fundamentally by the addition of a baby to his circle, he never realized, or if he did realize it, it was only with that intellectual comprehension that is as far away from real compre-

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hension as the imagination of the smell of a flower is from the real smell.

He welcomed the baby with joy. He could afford, with care, to bring up a child and give him a fair education, which would enable him to shift for himself when the time came for him to go to work. John had, beside, vague and lofty ideas about a man's duty to the community, but all his theories were impersonal. It was not strange that this should be so. John's information about all such things had been chiefly taken from novels, wherein the young mother is never presented in any other manner than as a sweet, patient creature with her eyes full of holiness, sewing away on little clothes. There was no other way for him to learn anything, because fathers do not talk about those things to men who are not fathers. All the traditions concerning the protection of a young mother, all the traditions about the care and rearing of children, are passed on from mothers to daughters. A man has no way of knowing any of these things, except by his own personal experience. The blun-

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ders that other men have made he will make. No one has told him what they are, because all the lore has passed on among the women. Few men know what a great lore it is, even after the experiences that go with the coming of their children have surprised them into knowing that there is such a lore at all.

So John, like other men, was pathetically unprepared for any of the things that were to happen. The night Louise came John had no thought in his mind except for Constance. The doctor said she was strong — that was all John thought. She could look up and smile at him, and John paid little attention to the things the doctor had to say about Louise being a fine child. By and by Constance went to sleep, and her grasp on his hand relaxed. Then the doctor ordered him away.

It was only then that John remembered he had a daughter, and began to wonder what she looked like.

What the baby really looked like was a monkey, a little red-faced monkey. Her mouth



“If this child’s going to be an idiot, tell me at once”

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was lop-sided, one eye was closed tighter than the other, her head was flattened down in front, and her brow was wrinkled like the brow of an ape.

John cast an apprehensive eye at the nurse. Could it be that his child was a monstrosity? John determined to have it out at once with the nurse.

"See here, you know," he said, "after all, I'm a man, and I can stand up and take it like other men. If this child's going to be an idiot, don't hesitate to tell me at once."

The nurse laughed at him.

"I guess you're not used to babies, Mr. Greatrax," she said. "That's as fine a girl as ever I saw."

John looked again, and the sight of his child reminded him that there is professional patter among all classes. He determined to pursue the subject and get to the bottom of it.

"Is that red blotch on her cheek a birth-mark?" he asked next.

"Oh, that will go away," the nurse answered

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indifferently, as she was busy folding up some little garment.

“What makes her twitch her hands?” said John. “Is she going to be a nervous child?”

“All little babies do that, Mr. Greatrax. Don’t you worry.”

The doctor came in, and cast a scrutinizing eye upon the child, put his head down to her chest, and listened. John held his own breath. When the doctor stood up, his air was quite non-committal. It suddenly occurred to John that this was his baby, and he should n’t care to lose it. As the doctor turned away, John detained him with a hand on his sleeve.

“Is there anything wrong with her, Doctor? Has she got consumption?”

The doctor laughed. “Consumption? No! She’s as sound a child as I ever saw. You have n’t anything to worry about. Everything’s gone off first-rate. You’ve had a pretty hard strain yourself, and you’d better go out and take a walk and get some fresh air.”

John said he would; but he defiantly went

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back for another look at his child, and this time she did not look so homely. The nurse was doing something about the crib, but she stood back. Nurses are patient with fathers.

And then came one of John's great world moments, one of the experiences that we all pass through, that are eternally wonderful, and are so commonplace that descriptions of them seem tiresome. In the presence of that little monkey John had the assurance to think to himself, "I wonder whom she looks like?"

And it was one of the sad little tricks played upon us by Nature that as he went for his walk his thought was more of his baby than it was of Constance; if there had been any anxiety about her, this might have been different. But Constance was sleeping peacefully, and the doctor had told him not to worry. No doctor could tell him not to worry about his child, for with the realization that she was his child had come the beginning of the hopes and fears that could never be absent from his mind so long as his baby should live; for Fear and Love

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are born together when a child comes into the world.

Since John was an optimistic man, hope predominated in him. Presently he came to a stop in the middle of the street to laugh at himself. He had caught himself wondering whom she would marry!

When he came home, Constance was awake, and he went to her at once. She turned her head toward him.

“Do you approve of colleges for women?” she asked. “Do you think we’d better send her to college?”

And at sight of Constance’s pale face, John forgot all about the baby again. “Come on, let’s get well first,” he said, trying his best to laugh.

“I suppose,” said Constance, “men don’t look so far ahead.”

John said nothing. He did n’t speak of Louise’s husband.

John did n’t see his child again until the next morning, and then he had a surprise.

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“Good heavens!” he exclaimed. “How the little—” He was going to say “beasts” with manly bravado, but he did n’t; “creatures” seemed to be a good compromise, so he said, “How the little creatures do change!”

The baby’s forehead had smoothed out, her eyes were alike, her mouth was not lop-sided. Her face was still red, but she was no longer ugly — to John.

There remained still, however, one anxiety. He approached the nurse timidly, mindful of her superior tone of the night before. This time he would be diplomatic, and turn it off with a joke.

“Don’t they open their eyes for a few days? I know that cats don’t.”

His jocularity was misplaced, and the nurse took him down with an uncomprehending stare.

“Certainly she’s opened her eyes, Mr. Greatrax. They’re blue.”

John’s were brown. The baby would probably look like Constance. Constance was not plain. John did not have much confidence in his own good looks, and on the way down to the office he

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found a certain comfort in the fact that his daughter would probably be beautiful. The importance of good looks in women suddenly forced itself upon him.

He entered the office more self-conscious than he had ever been in his life. On his wedding journey he had had Constance to brave it out with him, but in the office he had to meet it alone. He tried to face it out with a businesslike and peremptory manner. He strode to his desk and picked up his mail. It was his custom to read and sort out all of his letters before answering, but this morning, at the third letter, he called in his stenographer. He did not know why he did this, or at least he said to himself that he did not know why.

He fancied that she looked at him curiously, and he dictated his replies to the three letters sternly. Then came an embarrassing pause while he opened the fourth. The fourth seemed to be an incomprehensible letter from a man who didn't know what he wanted. John read it two or three times. At the third reading he looked

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up and saw Miss Plunkett's eyes fixed upon him. Miss Plunkett had a shy smile.

“Excuse me, Mr. Greatrax,” she said; “is it a boy or a girl?”

John wondered that he had never seen how pretty Miss Plunkett was.

“It's a girl,” he replied briefly.

“Oh, I'm so glad,” said Miss Plunkett. John looked at her again and saw that she was glad, quite radiantly glad. John found himself pausing awkwardly. He was not in the habit of passing the bounds of business in his office.

“Both doing well!” he blurted out.

“Oh, I'm glad,” repeated Miss Plunkett, and there was another awkward pause.

“Suppose, Mr. Greatrax,” went on Miss Plunkett, “that I write these three letters, and then come back for the rest?” And John, who had never before permitted his office routine to be interrupted by a member of the staff, said gratefully:—

“Yes, thank you, Miss Plunkett, I think that will be the best plan,” and she went away.

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Even when he saw all the other stenographers crowding around her at her typewriter he had no thought of reproving this breach of office discipline.

“It’s a good thing to have it over with, and have all the curiosity satisfied, so that they can get to work,” said John gruffly to himself. Out of the corner of his eye he watched the news that he had a daughter spread from one to another of his assistants until it got into the corner among the office boys. And he went through the day in wonderment. He had never meant to make friends with his staff; he had meant to be for them a just taskmaster. He had demanded prompt obedience, and had received it; but there was something in the obedience that day, an eagerness and a joyfulness, that the office had n’t known. No matter how hard he tried to keep his usual impassive expression, John could not help giving back the kind, confident smiles that greeted every one of the directions which he gave.

In the course of the day most of the officers of the company dropped in and shook him by the

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hand. Even the president, a busy man, found time to come; and he let a directors' meeting of busy men wait for him while he told John about the births of his own four children.

So the coming into the world of the little creature, so unimportant save to himself and Constance, had done for John what, in the hurry of business, no devotion to work could have done for him. It had introduced him to the sympathy of his staff, and into the great fellowship of men with children. He found himself wondering, toward the close of the day, how many of the men whose quality of work he knew so accurately, belonged also to the fellowship. He knew who was married and who was not, because it was his theory that married men in an office were steadier than bachelors, and he tried to get them. He now found that he would like to know more. He had an absurd desire to saunter down to the desk of his chief clerk, and ask in a nonchalant manner how many children he had, and whether they were boys or girls. But this might have led to a public handshaking, and John hated scenes.

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Nevertheless, at night in the elevator, happening to go down alone, he asked the elevator man whether he had any children, and added shyly that a baby had been born to him yesterday ; and when the elevator man promptly took off the oily glove and shot out a black hand, John took it thankfully, feeling the pleasant humbleness of being welcomed among the fathers.

And so in a single day his whole view of life was changed. That evening he looked with a new respect and wonder upon the little creature that had bound him so closely to so many different persons.

At nine o'clock the nurse drove him away from his wife and baby. John sat down in the sitting-room. The familiar place wore a lonesome air. Intangible things about the room, too small for him to notice by themselves, told him that their mistress was absent. A room gets to look this way soon. It had been two days since Constance had walked through the room putting little kindly touches on it.

After he had read a moment, John looked up,

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half expecting to see his wife in her accustomed chair. The loneliness of the place gave him a sense of cold. He tiptoed around restlessly. Then, almost mechanically, without forming any definite plan, he took his hat and went out.

John's feet were taking him to his club, where he could tell the glad tidings to a great many more people. He did not know this, at least he refused to know it. The excuse he gave himself was that the place was altogether too lonely for a man to stay in; and there may have been something in this, for when a person has gone through any of the big experiences of life he needs the kindly, every-day intercourse of other fellows to make him forget what a serious business life is, after all.

“I won’t tell any one at the club about this,” said John. “Nothing is more disgusting than a man who talks about his children.”

This was the last relic of John’s pre-father days, and it vanished when he met Smith, whom he knew but little.

“Won’t you take a cigar, Mr. Smith?” he

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said. "Ah — the fact is, I have a new daughter, and — a — "

So John and Smith had a talk, and John discovered that Smith was a very good fellow indeed.

By the end of the evening every one in the club knew about John's daughter. Those who seemed not to know, John told. At the last Carrington came in, and John shouted across the room: —

"Oh, Carrington, got a daughter!"

The sight of Carrington recalled Aldrich, who had been his roommate. Aldrich was one of the fraternity of fathers; he ought to be told at once.

John started for the telegraph-room. On the way he stopped short.

"Great Scott!" said John, "I've forgotten to telegraph to — "

He stopped short again. To whom had n't he forgotten to telegraph?

He had informed Constance's parents and his own by telephone, but that was all. He hurried over to the reading-room, got out a block of tel-

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egraph blanks, and every message that he wrote brought up the vision of some one else. It was his introduction to social responsibility. Constance had attended to that branch of life. Before he had finished, the club closed.

That day and the next day were the miracle days, the days when John realized that a baby was a heaven-sent wonder. The next day it began to eat.

And with that came John's second feeling of responsibility, in which he began to enter human relations with the baby. This came to pass about the middle of its meal, when the first greediness of the creature had worn off, leaving John with the impression that piggy noises properly emitted are rather pleasanter than the noises of turtle doves. But after ten minutes of this it wanted to go to sleep, and then John was allowed to poke it in the cheek with his forefinger. That set it going again. He learned this from the nurse, and then he waved her aside and did it himself. It was his first reassumption of authority as head of the house, but there was no personal arro-

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gance in it; the simple fact was that the nurse did not belong to the family.

After this, whenever he had a question to ask of the nurse, he delivered it authoritatively, as one who is the responsible person in the house, no longer a mere outcast. The rightful heir of responsibility returned to his own, and he was pleased to see that this attitude affected the nurse; that she answered his questions without a sniff. After this, whenever he detected in her manner too great manifestations of patience with him, he frowned. He was the Head of the Family.

He had plenty of questions to ask, for the baby continued to give him anxiety. She had not yet shown her father her eyes. When John came in she was always asleep, or else she was eating, and she ate with her eyes closed. John continued to hope that they were not deceiving him about her. So much sleep did n't seem natural to him. And this was only one of his worries. The world seemed to be full of alarming information about his daughter. Paragraphs about the deaths of

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little children leaped at him from his morning paper. He picked up a magazine and found an article on infant mortality. A man at the club told him of a child who had been born blind, and he went home at once.

When he bent over the cradle, he met the gaze of two perfectly serene blue eyes. It was after this that he began to call his baby "she" instead of "it."

But even though this doubt had been banished, John daily gathered more news as to what an insecure place the world is for very little children. The first day is the most perilous time; but the first day had been passed. The clutch on life is n't a very firm one before two weeks, he found out. The croup, which had been merely a disease for John, now became a demon, until he ascertained that little babies seldom caught it. He wondered if Constance knew how full life is of menace for a daughter of Louise's age. He sounded her tactfully, but Constance was quite serene; and then John perceived that it would be his duty to stand between her and fear, and for this he

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presently felt entirely competent. As the days went on, and the baby did n't fall ill and Constance had no setbacks, he began to feel very competent indeed. The elasticity of his spirits communicated itself to his muscles, and produced a style of walking which is described as a strut.

The miracle stage passed quickly. John himself was surprised at the quickness with which all these new emotions became a part of him. He exchanged gazes with his daughter several times. The wonder of it was always in his mind, but it was an old wonder, not a new one, not less dear, but not so poignant. Poking her in the cheek became a device to make her eat so that she might get fat, instead of an experiment to prove that here was a new-born being with actual intelligence. In fact, he got so used to his baby that he began to get impatient for signs of further intelligence, to wonder how long it would be before she would laugh, and to find the time of her first step disagreeably far away. In anticipation he went out and bought a baby

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book which had blanks already provided for the date of the first smile and the first step. He had seen one before, and had tolerated it as one of the sentimental things that women like to have. He gave this one to Constance with an indifferent air; but John had bought that book for himself. He also discovered why it is third-rate singers in theatres can thrive on songs about babies.

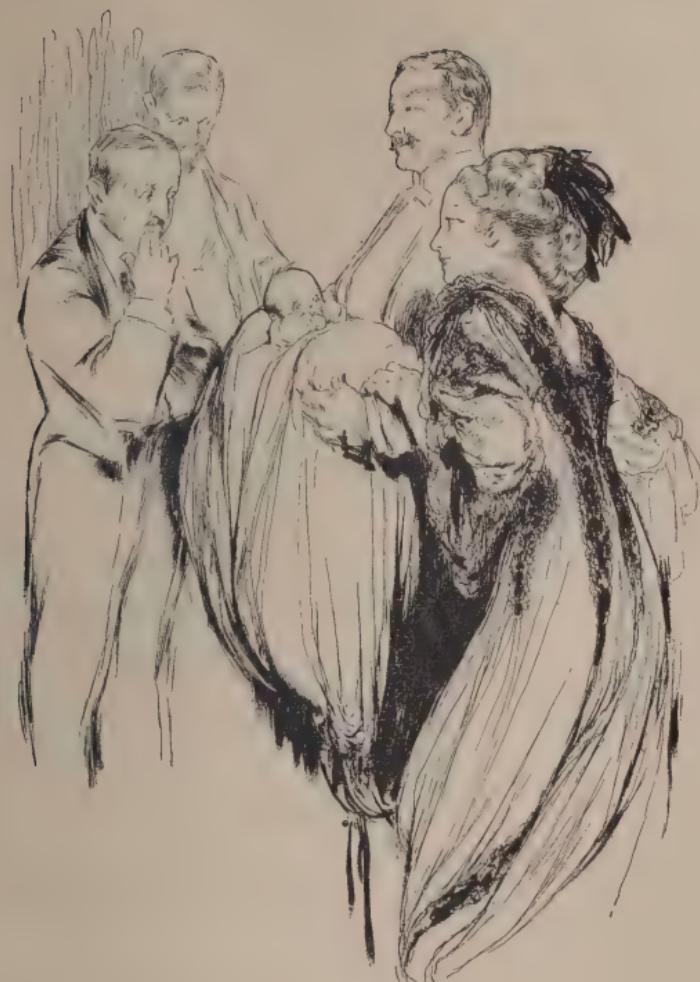
All this prepared him for his final adjustment to the new state of things. At the end of three weeks the nurse went away, the family was left alone, and there engulfed Constance that terrible loneliness that comes when the strong arm of the nurse is withdrawn. Up to this time she had had only to get well. No responsibility had been hers. And now, weak as she still was, Louise was in her unpracticed and ignorant hands.

John came home to find her crushed under her burden of responsibility. Her look frightened him; she seemed so frail and so tired, at the point of fatigue a man so dreads, when he realizes that it is only a step to tears. She lifted tragic eyes to him.

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“She *will* go to sleep when she’s eating—and I can’t wake her up and feed her both—I can’t do it,” she protested.

Here John rose to a height of daring of which he would not have believed himself capable. Without a second’s hesitation, “Give her to me,” said he boldly; and he took his daughter from his wife’s arms. He patted her with what he hoped was a practiced air, just as he had seen the nurse do. He did it, he hoped, just as if picking babies up were an every-day occurrence. In point of fact, he remembered that an elderly lady had told him in his youth that cats, when lifted, like to be supported with a hand held underneath, and he thought that this principle would work out with babies, and it did. And having awakened Louise, he handed her back, triumphant, to Constance, diffusing an air of competency, as though he could help rear any number of children at once. And though Constance’s sense told her that he knew at most less about babies than she did, still, in this moment of desolation, he seemed a strong arm



Picked Louise up and displayed her

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to lean on; and if he could solve the present difficulty so promptly, perhaps he could help with others. At any rate, she was comforted. Whether he knew much or little, he stood back of her. There were two of them to carry the burden of responsibility.

It may be that John's success as a father led him to seem vainglorious when he was not. He certainly put on airs about the baby. It was not long after this that he lured two old friends ostensibly to dinner. His invitation did not include a visit to Louise, and of course it was merely an accident that she should have been awake at the time when they were there. As a matter of fact, she was usually awake at that hour, but the men did n't know this — or perhaps they would n't have come. Men have a becoming shyness about babies, and these were bachelors.

John had arrived at that state of arrogance in which he actually went over to the crib, and asking no one's permission, picked Louise up and displayed her to the two men, who were as embarrassed as a dog in the presence of a June bug.

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He laid her down again with an expert hand, and ostentatiously changed the subject, to show that he was not among those fathers who pushed their children down other people's throats. But his manner said :—

“ This is my baby ; and when you fellows can show me anything as interesting you will be of value to society.”

It was after they had gone that Constance came up, and put her hands on John's shoulders, and said :—

“ After all, you know, it 's my baby, too.”

II

THE CONQUEST OF THE FEET

HANDS are easier for a little baby to understand than feet. They do not live so far away, for one thing. There was no time in the day when Louise was awake that they were not awake, too, generally hovering above her like little white butterflies, perhaps she would have thought, if she had known about little white butterflies. They puzzled her a good deal at first, and sometimes they irritated her. All of a sudden the white butterflies would come down chug on her cheek, with an impact that one would not have expected of such fragile things. Then, before Louise had time to do more than pucker her face, they would fly off in the air again, and hover amusingly in easy range of vision.

But Louise really got acquainted with her hands long before the day when she noticed them

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fluttering around above her. She could clasp them into a little pink ball, and she could hang on to things with them always. Curling the hand tightly around anything it happens to touch is a baby's first accomplishment. It begins on the first day, and it comes from that time, as John explained to Constance, when you were expected to hang on in mid-air by a twig of the tree which was your home. Constance has always believed that Louise knew that she was holding on to her mother; that in the vague, dark world in which her little baby lived she got some strange feeling of protection by curling her little pink, warm fist around a grown-up finger. It was useless to tell Constance that this curling of a hand around a finger was a reminiscence of the tree-clinging time. Constance knew better. She knew so much better that she did not even dispute with John, as people do when they're only half sure that their position is tenable. She had her own reasons for her comfortable certainty, for had she not lain in bed long hours with that little hand clinging faithfully to

The Conquest of the Feet

hers, as if it would never let go, as if this was the only way that Louise could feel the comforting companionship with her mother? To be held in arms, to hold a finger — that was all that Louise knew yet of the many different ways by which one may communicate with one's fellows.

Constance understood this almost as if she remembered back through the days when holding a finger was an immense comfort. She tried to tell John something about it, not to dispute with him because of the tree theory, but just by way of giving him information about his daughter. At this time John seemed to Constance strangely lacking in intuition.

“She likes to hold my finger,” she explained, “because then she knows some one is near, and she is n’t afraid any more.”

“Near!” said John, with scientific contempt. “Afraid! What does a baby who can’t focus her eyes yet know of ‘near’ or ‘afraid’?”

“She feels safer, though, does n’t she, when I’ve got her in my arms? She does n’t cry when I hold her.”

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“She feels warm in your arms,” John explained.

Constance did not argue that the baby also felt warm when she was in her crib and had a hot-water bottle, and yet cried. She did n’t argue, because she knew. Still, she was willing to share some of her wonderful discoveries with John.

“She does n’t cry, either, when she holds my finger.”

“No,” said John; “the moment she begins to cry she bats her hands up and down in the air.”

But Constance knew there was more in it than that. She put her finger on Louise’s palm, and Louise’s little fingers curled themselves around it with a tight, comforting grasp, as if she never meant to let go again, and John, as he watched them — Constance with her contented little smile, which seemed to say that she knew a variety of things about babies that he did n’t, and Louise lying there with serene, unblinking eyes, as much of her mother’s hand in

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hers as she could get — felt that perhaps, after all, Constance was right; that there was more in it than that.

So it was, from the first, that Louise's hands had a more intimate relationship to her than her feet. They were almost always kind to her. Not only could she hold on to other people with them, but from the very first she could put her thumb in her mouth, and play at the game of eating, which is about the most comforting game that a little baby can play, and the only one it can play at all for a long time. It was probably because her hands were there so much, and so near, that they were the first things she noticed, and it was a long time before she connected them with the comforting, warm little thumb with which she could eat herself off to sleep.

There again, about the thumb-sucking business, Constance and John had different theories.

“She must be awfully hungry,” he remarked, leaning over the crib, and watching his daughter pulling away at a dry source. “Are you sure she's had enough to eat? Just see how she's

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going on over that thumb of hers. I should think she'd chew it off."

"She's sleepy when she does that," said Constance. "She is n't hungry at all; she can't be—she's eaten everything in sight. She sucks her thumb when she's sleepy."

"How do you know?" said John, who always likes to come by the sources of information.

"Oh, I just know," said Constance, with that feminine vagueness of hers. "She likes to make believe. Eating," Louise's mother explained sagely, "is the nicest thing in life Louise knows about. That's why she makes believe about it. Children," she went on, "always put themselves to sleep making believe the pleasantest things they know."

Then a far-off memory stirred in John. Clear back in the mists of time he remembered a very little boy who used to go to sleep making believe that he owned a dog—a dog taller than he was. Every night for a long time he played with that dog, until the dog became a reality to

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him. That was why John did n't say out loud the words that had risen to his lips : " How do you know ? "

It was quite by chance, as so many important things in this world happen, that Louise identified the comforting thumb with the mysterious white things that fluttered above her head so much. She was watching them, as usual, when one of them flew down like a bird right into her mouth. In a moment it flew out again and joined its companion, which still waved rhythmically to and fro. Again, quite of its own self, it flew down to Louise's mouth, which made her realize that she was sleepy.

After that this often happened, although it was long before the time when they began to play with each other in the air, and would come down nearer to her eyes or go far off, just as she wished them. For her hands were her first playthings, of course, and she spent many long, tranquil hours letting them do all their little tricks for her, wind and unwind themselves, or climb the fingers of one hand with the thumb

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and finger of the next. She had struck up a great friendship with her hands, in spite of their coming down and smacking her unexpectedly every little while, long before she noticed her feet.

Of course she must have seen her feet often before the day of the blue shoes, for most of the time, when she was awake, they were waving around within her vision. Sometimes they were pink and bare, and other times they had on various colored little silk bootees.

They were very useful to her in smiling. She smiled almost more broadly with them than she did with her mouth, and she used them also to try and sit up with, for she had an erroneous idea of how sitting up was accomplished. You stick your head up in the air like a turtle and you stick your legs up, and somehow, by sticking your two ends so very high in the air, you ought finally to find yourself sitting up on the place — designed for the purpose. This is not so, you will not; but Louise was a grown-up baby before she discovered a better method. For almost a year she tried, with that persistence

The Conquest of the Feet

which is so praiseworthy and so futile, to seat herself by these methods.

“She thinks that if she only once succeeds in making a complete hoop of herself she will be able to roll into a sitting-up position,” Constance explained.

Then, too, feet were very useful in crying. About this John had his own theories. “The primitive man must have gestured as eloquently with his feet as he does to-day with his hands. He probably clung with his upper pair of hands to the treetop, while he shook a monitory foot at his offspring below, or waved a good-by to his wife, or clapped his feet together to applaud Ab escaping the tiger beneath him. We have lost much in descending from the trees. It has deprived us of a whole series of expressions of emotions with the feet. It has left us only anger. But think how futile is the stamping of a foot, or the kicking of an offending door, compared to the whole gamut of emotions that Louise is able to play with her feet, even though she has not recognized them as her own.”

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Louise's mother thought that most touching of all was the way she smiled with them. When Constance came near, Louise smiled so hard with her hands and feet that she seemed like a little bird about to flutter herself quite off the bed. In the midst of Constance's happiness there came absurd, sad moments, when she reflected that by and by a time would come when if she shut her eyes she would no longer hear Louise smiling at her with her heels.

It was such a very different thing, this fluttering welcome of a smile, from the steady thump-thump of anger, or from the storm of impatient blows with which she beftailed her bed when food dared to be a moment late.

It is certain, then, that using them as she did for so many different purposes, and necessary as they were to her in the expression of her emotions, she must have seen her feet some time. But the first time that she seemed to notice them as they went by was on the day of the blue shoes. She was lying flat on her back when they appeared, blue and resplendent, above the white

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horizon of her dress ; two new blue shoes, bought by Constance not for ornament, but to keep her socks on, number nothing in size, and lacing up the middle like real shoes.

Louise looked at them round-eyed, gave a little jump of surprise—and they disappeared. She stared at the place where they had been, and forgot about them ; but presently one deliberately came into view. It acted as if it might be making right for her. She waited for it with her mouth open, but the disappointing thing approached only half way, wavered for a moment—she kicked encouragingly—and it was gone again !

And so it went on. Sometimes two of them would appear together ; sometimes only one. Sometimes they were close together, blue twins ; sometimes so far apart that to see them both she had to turn her eyes from one to the other — a matter of time, considering the undirigibility of eyes—and sometimes, before she could more than catch the second one out of the tail of her eye, it had gone away again. Again, they twinkled distractingly high above her head. And al-

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ways the same thing happened. Just as they came near enough to be of some use, she kicked—and they were gone.

For a long time they were always fresh to her. She forgot them during the five seconds that they commonly stayed away at any one time. They were a new phenomenon when they came back. It was an epoch from the time she noticed them first to the time when suddenly she looked expectantly to the edge of her dress, waiting for them to come up behind it, as one might expect the sun to rise.

Then one day she made another great discovery. She made it, of course, as most great discoveries are made, by accident. They were waving around in the air above her, and she was watching them, and paying no attention to her hands, which were waving around, too, when in mid-air her hand encountered something, and according to her custom she clutched it. And lo! the foot stood still, blue shoe and all.

She was so pleased she laughed all over, which of course destroyed the source of her joy. Her

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foot and her hand flew away, nor did they meet again for a long time. It was only after they had met thus by chance a great many times that the great discovery was made, and that was, that your hand might catch your foot if it tried hard, and had good luck besides.

But the foot is a shy bird, and not so easy to catch as one might suppose. It shines in mid-air, so far above as to seem almost inaccessible. Louise would bring her hands waveringly toward it—they clasped on each other! There was the foot, waving derisively above her just the same. Of course, when you are a very little person, like Louise, you do not know exactly how far away things are. Often, moreover, they look to be on one side, and are not there; sometimes by accident you catch them in your hands on the other side. But these difficulties disappear gradually.

There are several ways of catching a foot. One may proceed with great caution,—quietly and waveringly and patiently one may let one's hand approach it, and then gently but firmly close around it; or one may dart out on it as it

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passes by and catch it on the fly. This is the way Louise usually went about it; the game is more exciting so, but it is precarious. Stalking pays better in the long run.

The prime end of the foot, Louise could see, was that of all things worth having. It was evidently good to put in one's mouth, not so much when it was blue or white as when it was pink, with wriggling toes on the end of it. And it was also much easier to catch in its pink state than in any other, because at that time she was apt to be untrammeled by skirts and other impediments.

The foot, however, is like any other wild thing. It may be tamed by patience and kindness. There came a time when Louise's feet came when called. She had only to think of them, and there they arrived in sight, wiggling pink and expectant, begging her to catch them and play with them. That was the first step in the great conquest of the feet.

But when you 've caught a foot, even when you can catch it every time, that is far from

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bringing the perverse creature into your mouth. She would grasp it firmly with both hands, and tug at it, and open a pink expectant mouth. Had she got it? No. It had gone over her shoulder. Again, it turned on her with a sudden blow in the eye. She then let go if she could; but the foot is a perverse creature. Hard as it is to catch, sometimes it is equally hard to let go of. It is very surprising, when you expect to express discomfort with your foot, to have it trammed. At such times, when it goes away, it goes violently, and leaves your hand to shut with a snap.

Still, the foot is a creature which grows tamer with increasing age. Every day sees it more and more of a domesticated animal, less shy, less prone to hide at the approach of the capturing hand. In the end, Louise mastered her feet as completely as an expert horse-tamer masters a restive horse. The Conquest of the Feet was an accomplished fact. In a short time there was only a memory for Constance to recall of the inspiriting chase that she had watched so often.

III

THE SMILE

FROM the very first Constance had been signaling over the great gulf that separated her from Louise, just as all mothers must. You will hear them talking to their little babies just as if they could really understand. But a little baby's spirit must walk a weary way in darkness before it may answer in response to older people who look so anxiously for the first expression of consciousness.

I do not know how many times Louise looked up into Constance's smile before she got to expect it, and how many times more before she understood what it was.

Wherever Louise looked, indeed, there was always a smile to greet her—and the smiles that are given to little babies are the dearest ones in the world. And each one of these smiles was a signal to Louise across the great separating gulf.

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It is not to be wondered at that parents look so anxiously for the day when their little children shall respond to their signals, or that they watch so tremulously for the first vague little smile to come to them ; for this answering back is a sign that the child's spirit is born, that it is beginning, in its own vague way, to realize that it is in a world where there are other people that understand and love it.

Both Constance and John began their signals, just as all parents must, almost as soon as Louise came. She was only a few days old when John insisted that she followed his finger with her eyes as he moved it. He proudly told the nurse that she did this.

“Look !” he said. “When I put my finger here”—he held it two feet from Louise’s eyes—“and slowly move it, she follows it with her eyes.”

But at that moment Louise tranquilly gazed at the ceiling.

“She did it a minute ago, anyway !” Constance protested.

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“Well, then, this baby’s a wonder, Mrs. Greatrax,” the nurse replied. “They have to be older than this child is before they know light from darkness, let alone following fingers with eyes !”

Constance and John said no more, but looked at each other. They had both seen Louise’s gaze follow the guiding finger. They knew they had. John would have liked to be vindicated, because a man likes to prove that his scientific experiments are correct ; but, after all, that was of small importance. He had seen the blue eyes move as his finger moved ; so had Constance. It would take more than a mere nurse to convince them that this was an accident.

The nurse showed the same unsympathetic spirit about Louise’s smiles. When Constance cried out, with some little emotion, “Look, the baby’s smiling !” the nurse informed her, “They have to be a sight older than that before they smile. That’s wind, Mrs. Greatrax.”

She explained her theory further.

“Every time a baby as young as this — and a

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lot older — smiles, it's no more nor less than a little wind on its stomach. Is n't it, my sweetums?" she appealed to the baby, who lay with placid stolidity in its mother's arms.

She went on with more information to the same effect for some moments — quite unnecessarily, Constance thought. She had her own explanation about this wavering and touching little smile that from time to time lighted up her baby's face. Nor did she ever tell the nurse's explanation to John. She let him enjoy Louise's occasional smiles without once disturbing him by any coarse materialistic explanation — explanations which she herself in no wise believed.

John, for his part, not being enlightened, never doubted that Louise was smiling at some little thought of her own brought from the other world. To him it seemed very touching that a little baby whose mind was still in darkness, who did n't know one person from another, and had n't yet even recognized her hands as belonging to her, could get enough sensation of happiness to smile mysterious little smiles all by herself ; and it may

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be that, after all, he was right. For Constance reasoned: "If babies can cry human tears, as Louise did after a few days, why is it more wonderful that they should smile, because of their own inner contentment, human smiles?"

You will find few mothers who agree in their hearts with the nurse's theory.

It was this theory that planted the seed of distrust for the older generation in Constance's heart. There she was, still weak, and heaven knows, inexperienced in the care of babies, relying on the nurse for every bit of the precious lore by reason of which one is enabled to bring up one's little baby as one should, already feeling that with all the things that the nurse knew that she did n't, there was a thing or two that Constance knew better about her child than any nurse ever could.

The nurse was, undeniably, a competent woman. She could perform, with a dexterity that to Constance seemed nothing short of legerdemain, the operation of lifting the baby in and out of the bathtub, a feat that Constance would

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no more have ventured than she would have tried a conjurer's trick, like making an omelet in John's hat, for instance.

When it came to dressing babies, the nurse was a marvel. Constance, as yet, had an uneasy feeling that the baby might break while in her arms, and the caution with which she held her daughter amounted to fear. Young mothers who have never had little brothers or sisters are apt to be like this. The nurse puts the baby in their arms, and there they sit, rigid as stone monuments, not daring to move hand or foot, their faces very masks of loving concern for fear that something may happen to the little, wabbling thing that is so strange on the one hand, more completely their own than anything else in the world on the other.

Fathers share this feeling in greater intensity. Many a strong man has had the perspiration break out on his brow when a helpless infant has for a moment been intrusted to his clumsy and anxious care, and it is only the exceptional man who is ever at ease with his chil-

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dren before they have got into human habits of sitting up and having backbones.

But for all the nurse's outward dexterity and knowing ways, Constance observed things that the nurse did not, and by the time that Louise could hold her head up and the first nurse had been replaced by a mere fallible nurse-maid, a great change had come over Constance.

She was no longer the humble-minded creature who deferred meekly to the advice of the experienced mother. Indeed, no! She knew as much now as any mother. She herself could whisk Louise's plump little body in and out of the bathtub, and slip tiny garments over the baby's head with no more concern than she had had as a child when dressing a doll.

Indeed, there grew in her a contempt for older women. She made the discovery that between her way of bringing up a baby — you will observe that she called it *her* way — and her mother's way, there yawned a gulf as wide as between the modern and ancient ways of transportation. Constance found this out the first

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night that her mother came to visit, when this lady had remarked: "It's almost time that you put the baby to sleep, is n't it?" and inquired further, "Do you have to sing to her long?"

"Sing to her?" Constance echoed.

"It took me less time to get my children off," said the older lady, with a touch of complacency, "than almost any one I knew. I've known a woman to work a whole evening and then have to give up and let some other member of the family try."

"How dreadful!" exclaimed Constance; but in her heart she was thankful that her way was not that of an older generation.

At a stated hour Louise was put down in her crib, and then closed her eyes and went to sleep without any further ado—no rockings, no singings, no anythings but a slipping away to slumberland.

"Poor ittie sing—poor, ittie, darling, lonely sing!" the grandmother had sighed; and a sadness fell over her spirit. She had pictured herself again with a baby's little head upon her

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motherly bosom, rocking away in the dusk and crooning over again the little songs with which she had put her own children to sleep; the same songs they were, too, with which her mother had hushed her, and her mother's mother her children. And now here was Constance calmly turning her back on this almost sacred tradition; not only turning her back on it, but unmistakably shocked, as her eyes showed.

“I wonder they had any nerves left,” she exclaimed, “with such goings-on!”

So the mother and daughter stared at each other over the gulf which separated them. The mother had come expecting to mother her grandchild in the same time-honored ways with which she had mothered her own, only to find that the ways of mothers and children had changed over night, and that Constance, far from being ready in part to shift the care of the baby over to her, as she had hoped might be the case, had but little room for grandmothers in Louise's life.

No; by this time no older woman, not even if it was a grandmother, could tell Constance how

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to take care of her baby. Indeed, she felt adequate to tell other people how to mind Louise, and how not to. Her mother's presence was a secret source of anxiety to her. She hovered uneasily around her when she held the baby, in a way highly unflattering to a lady who had brought up successfully five boys and girls of her own.

Like other grandmothers, this one had small regard for the new ways of bringing up babies. Serenely and high-handedly she broke the rules that were supposed to be good for Louise's health and morals ; and even when she was restrained from taking the baby up at unseasonable moments, she would sit by the crib talking the immemorial "baby talk" with which women have forever communicated with their little children.

This proceeding disturbed John even more than it did Constance.

"Of course," he said politely, "I don't want to criticise your mother ; but do you think it can be good for Louise to hear her talk like that — just listen to her going on now !"

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In tones of deepest affection one could hear the older woman crooning, as she squeaked a red rubber animal deftly before Louise,—

“Ook at g’amma! Squeak! Moo-moo—squeak! Squeak! Nice moo-moo!”

“Of course,” John proceeded, “I know Louise luckily can’t understand her now, but it can’t be good for her to hear things like that. Why should she learn to know the cow as ‘Ickey-wickey moo-moo’? I never understood why women had to talk gibberish to young infants!” Louise’s father pursued. “Even you, Constance—I hear you saying things continually to her that have no sense.”

The crooning in the other room went on.

“I wish she’d stop it!” Constance whispered with anxiety, oblivious of the fact that her mother was only, in her own way, signaling for the answering look of comprehension which each of those who loved the baby searched for with so much diligence.

For Louise was progressing day by day along the road which leads to the smile of recognition.

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It was not very long before footsteps to her were no empty sounds, but meant the approach of people, the human beings whose society from the first she so longed for. Approaching footsteps on the stairway would stop her crying; if she was hungry, footsteps meant that food was at hand; if she was tired of lying in one position, again footsteps meant help. Indeed, if she was lying quite placid in her crib, contented enough with things as they were, if any one walked near her she would set up a clamor for recognition.

About this time she recognized Constance as the one who provided food for her; and in just what way a very little baby, still enshrouded in darkness, recognizes the mother that feeds it from all other people, no one quite understands. John unpoetically asserted that he thought it was probably by the sense of smell. But to Constance it was a beautiful mystery, not to be solved in any such materialistic way. It seemed to her as natural as it was mysterious that her baby, who knew so little, should know *her*. When John intimated to Constance that this was a mere vagary of ma-

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ternal pride, she felt sorry for him, almost as if she were robbing him of something, that the baby should recognize its mother before it did its father.

Every day brought Louise closer to Constance. Steadily and imperceptibly she advanced out of the darkness. She showed the dawning of her intelligence upon her face. Her little head sat bravely upright now on her shoulders, instead of wabbling around. Now, too, she definitely followed moving fingers, and even watched people at some distance, as they walked around the room. Strangers began to say, "How pretty she is getting to be" — which annoyed Constance very much, for she had always seen the elements of beauty in her daughter, as an experienced gardener foresees the beauty of a rose while it is yet a hard green bud.

She developed a definite little personality of her own, which was very evident to Constance, and made Louise as different from all the babies in the world as John was different from all men. Nothing seemed to her to show such crass igno-

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rance as the remark "How alike all little babies are!" Louise was a little entity all by herself, with a disposition of her very own, and her own likes and dislikes and ways of expressing them—to Constance, at least. And still the gulf was unbridged; still Louise had smiled no answering smile; and Constance continued spying on her daughter at all times for the first flicker of her spirit's awakening.

It came, as many important events do, quite unexpectedly. One waits for the important events of life—and behold! they have come and gone as do any commonplace and unimportant happenings, without causing us the great shock of emotion for which we have waited so long. So, one day when Constance was bending over Louise, talking with her as was her custom, Louise looked up and smiled—a little, wan flicker of a smile it was, a little, shy, tentative smile, as if she did n't know yet quite how to do it, and was a little afraid to try for fear she might n't, after all, have done it right.

It flickered a second, and died; then, while

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Constance was still looking, another little smile blossomed, a little more developed, as though the baby had said: —

“ Why — yes ; I *did* know the way, after all ! I did it all right.”

It seemed to Constance as if, far from being the first real smile that Louise had ever given to any one, from all time her little face had smiled up at her mother in this way ; for the things that we want very much seem so natural and right when at last they do happen that we do not understand that we should ever have been without them.

She could hardly wait, however, to tell of this great event to John, for this first smile, after all, is more important than almost any other crisis in a baby’s life. It is more important than the first step, or the first word; for the first smile is the first interchange of human sympathy.

All day Constance hovered about the baby, wanting her to smile again, and her patience was rewarded with another of those faint, glimmer-

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ing signals; but that was all. It may be that when a baby's spirit is first born, it is as tired and weak as is its new-born body.

John received the information with the proper enthusiasm—an enthusiasm tempered with a certain amount of skepticism, for Constance was prodigal of wonder tales in which Louise's prowess figured large.

“Smiles,” his manner seemed to say, “are all very well—but intelligent smiles are a different thing.”

He went over to try it for himself. The experiment was a failure. Louise viewed her parent with her usual uncompromising stare; and it was thus for several days thereafter. Louise kept her smiles for her mother and nurse. Every night Constance had new tales to tell of the number of times the baby had smiled to-day and how the smile had grown.

John felt secretly hurt that the baby had n’t smiled at him, and to hide this feeling, pretended a disbelief. But when no one was around he would steal on Louise to try and lure from

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her a little smile that should be all his own. He stalked these smiles for several evenings, and one night, as he leaned over her crib, he had his reward. She looked at him, and the blankness went out of her eyes, and her lips curled up; and John, looking hastily around to see if any one was near, lifted his little daughter in his arms. It was against the rules, but it is n't often that a father receives his first smile from his first baby.

From this time on, Louise was sure of her smiles, and trooped them out in little crowds. She seemed, indeed, to be proud of herself. She smiled for the sake of smiling; she smiled for any one. She smiled to herself just for practice, as an opera singer may go over her scales. And especially did she smile, with touching cheerfulness, if any one bent over her, showing artlessly the joy she felt in human society, corroborating for her mother the theory that she had tried for a long time to smile, and was as glad to bridge the gulf and come to them as they were to have her.

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And now, with the coming of her smiles, she had a new weapon, though she was unconscious of this. You may resist a baby who howls to be taken up, but you can't resist the bribe of a smile. And when her smiles developed into great, toothless laughs, she was quite irresistible. Both Constance and John held the opinion that there had never been anything made as beautiful as this same toothless laugh; but they dissembled their pride in it and tried to hide their upliftedness behind chaff. It was at this time that John took to calling the baby "Augustus," in memory of a baby hippopotamus who had been once a friend of his, who, he told people, was the only other thing he had ever seen that could open a pink and toothless mouth so far. Constance encouraged him in this, for well she knew that this was merely his way of calling attention as much as he wanted to to his daughter's beauty, yet at the same time saving his face, so to speak; because, of course, a man must not go into those frank raptures over his offspring's looks and charming ways that its mother may — though

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sometimes he does. It is better for him to come at it in a roundabout and jocular manner.

In this mothers have a great advantage over fathers. It is permissible, even expected, that a young mother shall say, "Look at the darling smile!" or, "Listen to that heavenly little sound she's making," while a father is condemned by custom to give no further vent to his admiration than a mere "Oh, the little kid's not a bad sort."

Before Louise had got to the definite point of signaling back she had already found that a voice has other uses than crying. At first the little murmur that she made was as shy and unpracticed as her first smile had been. It had no consonance; it was nothing but a liquid trickle of sound, and was so faint that across the room one could scarcely hear it. But it grew in force, and added to itself a stray sentence or two as it grew. It was a noise as sweet to Constance and John as that of birds, and more than that, it was a human noise. This first little unconscious song of babyhood is unlike the first song of any other creature.

The Smile

Every day she added to her range of baby speeches the sounds she could make, keeping pace with her smiles ; and then it was that there came to Constance the first shadow of knowledge of what has been called the “mother’s tragedy,” which is only one way of saying that little babies grow up very quickly. Here was her little baby, who only just before was a tiny, helpless bundle in her arms, sitting up proudly with pillows behind her and trying her own little personality and expression, and welcoming whoever came into the room with greetings of smile and speech.

It was at one of these times that John came in and, seeing his daughter sitting there looking so like the kind of grown-up baby that a man understands, without any hesitation or shyness he took her up and tossed her in the air ; and at this new sensation she opened her mouth and gurgled forth a real human laugh, and John cried out with joy to the world at large : —

“Did you hear that — she laughed ! A real laugh — a real one !”

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No shadow of the tragedy which hung over Constance touched him. He rejoiced that his daughter should grow up ; but because of that dear laugh, which she welcomed as gladly as did the baby's father, there came to Constance, sharp as a sudden flash of pain, the definite knowledge that in a very short time there would be no little baby in the house.

IV

“POOR LITTLE HELPLESS THING”

OF course Constance believed all the traditions, and there was every reason why she should, for the most experienced people talked glibly about the helplessness of the little child — and they do look helpless, heaven knows, when one sees them in the arms of a big person, their little heads wabbling around, too heavy for their tiny necks, their little hands waving irresponsibly in the air. Constance's nurse, even, a woman of experience and one who should have known better, talked glibly about it to her.

“The poor little helpless things!” said she. “There's nothing else in the world that's as helpless as a baby, Mrs. Greatrax. It goes to my heart every time I see them, they're so helpless.”

Louise looked helpless enough. She knew nothing in the world. As the nurse pointed out,

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she could n't find her mouth with her own thumb except by chance. The little motions were so touchingly purposeless that it would have taken a wiser woman than Constance to guess what a farce this helplessness was, although, had she not been so blinded with this popular superstition, she might have had a hint that after all it was nothing but a superstition, when Louise was only a few days old. Louise was crying.

“ What 's the matter ? ” Constance asked the nurse. “ Is she hungry ? ”

It takes a young mother some time to learn that every time her baby cries it is not because it is hungry ; and this desire to feed your baby goes deeper down than intelligence. It tears at the very instinct of motherhood to hear a baby crying for that reason.

“ Of course she is n't hungry, ” said the nurse. “ Have n't you just fed her ? ”

“ Well, I thought perhaps she did n't get enough, ” ventured Constance.

“ Now, Mrs. Greatrax ! ” the nurse expostu-

Poor Little Helpless Thing

lated, "if that child had eaten another mouthful, she'd have burst. A good solid half-hour she was with you, and eating all the time."

For from the first Louise applied herself to her business in life. No esoteric doubts were in her mind as to why she had been put in this world. Every bit of her knew why. It was to eat. This was the chief end of all good babies. She knew right away that mealtimes came exactly two hours apart. Even in her sleep she knew it. Let two hours elapse, and she would stir about and open a pink, receptive mouth. There was a little clock within her which kept "gastronomic time."

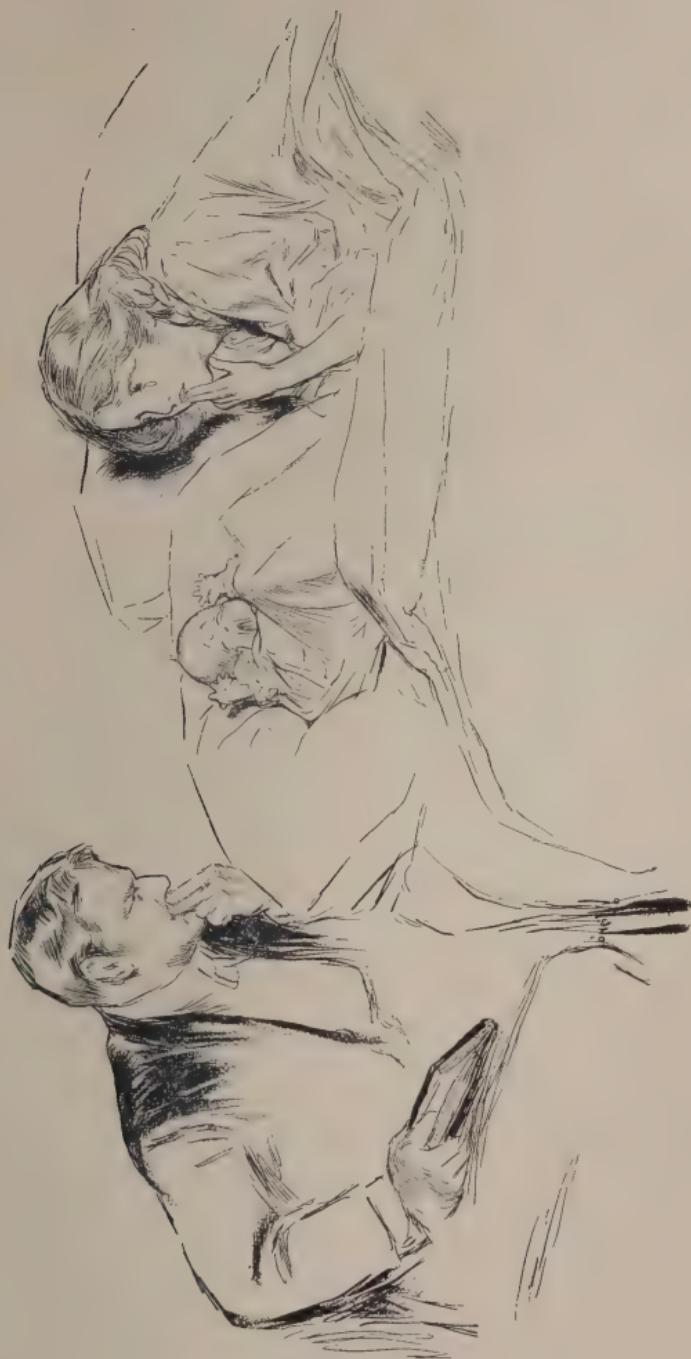
She applied herself to her task, in these early months, with passion. Her manners would have received praise in those countries where a part of table etiquette is to smack your lips. Her days moved past her, marked by a series of ten noisy meals. When she grew stronger there were only eight of them, and after a while only six.

The days were darkened by moments of waiting. Sometimes her hunger clock and the clock

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on the wall disagreed as to mealtimes. In those cases the one on the wall was almost always slow. They might be as much as ten minutes out of step, and in those ten minutes she would lift up her voice in what John called the “Hunger Song.” John, who was fond of music and knew a good deal about it, described the wails of his daughter in these words: —

“ This song, although it does not follow closely the conventional order of musical composition, still has its form, like any great musical expression, and is in no way to be confounded with the Exercise Song. It begins with andante movement, introducing a theme in monotone, constantly accelerated. This movement, however, is short, and is followed by a second, which begins allegro and rapidly increases to presto. The theme is a series of staccato notes upon the same pitch, and as the tempo becomes more rapid, so the stress becomes more violent. It shows a considerable virtuosity on the part of the performer. It begins forte — so forte, in fact, that the climax seems to have come at once.



The "Hunger Song"

Poor Little Helpless Thing

And the power with which the performer develops this strong beginning to an incredible fortissimo, sustained to such a point that each new tone is a surprise, because it seems impossible that any infant could cry louder without bursting, is one of the greatest marvels of parenthood."

Constance never saw the humor of talk like this. She did not realize that men often make jokes for the same reason that boys whistle in the dark. The stronger sex of whatever age now and then has recourse to bravado to keep up its spirits.

Since this time it could not possibly be hunger that was making Louise cry, what was making her was what Constance very much wanted to know.

The nurse went to the baby, looked her over, and straightened her clothes. Forthwith, the baby stopped crying and blinked serenely into vacancy while she was being fussed over. When the nurse went away again, she resumed her plaint. First there were two or three faint little

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cries. Then, with a sturdy clenching of fists, "Wah! Wah! Wah!" roared the helpless little Louise. For full sixty seconds she never stopped, and Constance turned her anxious head on the pillow.

"Why do you think she's crying?" she asked.

"Temper," responded the nurse briefly.

"Temper for what?"

"She wants to be taken up," said the nurse, learned in the ways of infants. "There's nothing on earth the matter with that child except that she wants to be taken up, Mrs. Greatrax."

Again the nurse went over to the baby, picked her up, laid her across her shoulder, and straightened her clothes. Louise's cries stopped short. Her little head, over the nurse's white dress, presented a spectacle of new-born helplessness. The nurse laid her down again, and Louise resumed her wail at the place where she had left off.

"You see," said the nurse triumphantly, "your child has temper, Mrs. Greatrax. She's the kind awfully easy spoiled. If you keep

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picking her up every time she makes a peep you 'll have her in your arms all the time ; and even that won 't satisfy her, and you and Mr. Greatrax will be walking the floor with her by turns."

And so Constance turned her head away, and endured her daughter's protests of " Wah ! Wah ! Wah ! " for another five minutes. During this time the nurse heartened her with things like, " She has a fine, healthy cry," or " It 's good for her to exercise her lungs. Every child should do a half-hour 's crying a day ; in the hospital, if they don 't cry, they spank them."

" Oh ! " exclaimed Constance.

Dusk had fallen, and with it came John, hurrying home from his office to his wife and little daughter. He came in with a face of consternation. He had hardly time to kiss Constance.

" Is the baby ill ? " he demanded.

" I 'd have an easy time of it if I never had a sicker child," returned the nurse dryly.

" Oh, no," replied Constance ; " she 's only exercising her lungs.

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Louise's voice rose to a high squeak of rage.

"Is n't there anything the matter with her? Is n't there a pin sticking into her?" he asked the nurse. All men have read how pins stick into babies.

"A pin!" said the nurse. "Babies nowadays don't have pins, Mr. Greatrax. Their little bands are sewed on."

"Don't they have *any* pins?" demanded John.

Every baby wore pins, he knew. His must not be cheated of her birthright.

"They have one pin," the nurse admitted with dignity.

"Where is it?" asked John.

"It's in its proper place, Mr. Greatrax," responded the nurse, and she picked up Louise, who stopped crying at once, having thus helplessly achieved what she wanted, and bore her from the room.

John puzzled a good deal over this pin. In time, however, he learned; and being a man rather proud that his persistence in an idea had



“If they don’t cry they spank them”

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accomplished considerable commercial results in his office, was unable to believe that his daughter's grief was not directly caused by that pin. He made a surreptitious investigation, and it loomed to him very large and vicious. It seemed really unnecessarily large.

"It's either that," he protested to Constance, "that makes her yell so, or else it's colic." John's other idea as to the reason why babies yell so was colic. He had read about that in books, too, as well as in the comic papers.

Thus you can see how many avenues of approach to the sympathies of her credulous parents the helpless baby has. She is essentially a grafter; she instinctively takes advantage of their tenderest emotions. That they misinterpret her wails, that they think she is suffering from pain when she only wants her own way, makes no difference to her. Throughout, as you shall see, Louise used her helplessness to trump the tricks of their discipline, and win the game.

This episode ought to have opened Constance's eyes to the state of affairs, or at least

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given her a hint of the tyranny which was to dominate both herself and John. But it did not ; tradition was too fully ingrained in her. As long as the nurse stayed, she and Louise's mother talked of Louise's helplessness with the sympathetic little words that two women use when they are talking by themselves about a baby. They talked about how Louise would die but for them — as if she could n't set the family scurrying around with a few lusty cries as could nothing else in the world ! As if ten minutes of conscientious yelling could n't take away her mother's peace of mind and upset the tranquil spirit of her father so that he walked the floor !

From day to day there grew in Constance that feeling that is so strong in all mothers, that she alone was Providence for her baby. It was through her that the baby lived and thrrove. It was her hands that turned the little helpless body into a new and comfortable position, her hands, too, that straightened out the folds of Louise's dress a hundred times a day. The baby's little head fitted into her shoulder as com-

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fortably as if that shoulder was made for no other purpose than the pillowing of the baby's head. No wonder that she imagined she was the stronger of the two, and that the baby depended on her for everything.

It was for her that Louise cried when she voiced the "Hunger Song." The words of this song were undoubtedly "Hurry, mother!" This is the way the rest of the family interpreted them, anyway, for when helpless little Louise lifted her voice they all hurried to make indignant search for the missing Meal. On these occasions Louise stopped with superb dramatic effect in the middle of a note. She looked up at the guilty Meal, a tear in her eye. After a moment of stomach-satisfying silence, she remembered how badly she had been treated, and with her mouth full, growled, "Mum-rrm-rrm-mum."

Poor Constance, she was not often late. When Louise's clock and the clock on the wall did not keep time together, she sat around waiting for those slow minutes to go by. You are not, in these latter days, allowed to feed your baby be-

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fore it is time ; this is imposed on all mothers by the nurse and the doctor and all the books.

“ Feed your child late,” they say, “ if you must, but as you value its stomach as its most important adjunct, never one minute before the hour.” There were some days, however, when there was no one around, that a certain young mother turned the hands of the clock up ten minutes and fifteen minutes at a time, to suit the hunger clock of Louise ; usually, however, Constance was made of harder stuff. Most young mothers are. They sit there waiting for the moment to arrive that they may cut the Hunger Song in two as though with a pair of scissors. And sometimes, as they sit there waiting, some of them pretending a stoicism that they do not feel, and others frankly wringing their hands, I think they must wish back those good old days before people knew so much about babies, and when one fed one’s Louise whenever one wished.

These songs did not happen very often with Constance’s Louise. Indeed, Louise’s clock was



Not allowed to feed your baby before it is time

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sometimes slow instead of fast. At such times she ate in a manner which implied that she was doing it as a favor to Constance, and after a very few moments she shoved back her plate and put down her knife and fork.

At all times, when Louise was through eating, she turned her back on her mother in the most unflattering way. Is this the same baby who filled the universe with the Hunger Song not fifteen minutes ago? Observe her twisting a disgusted head away from the dinner-table. When Constance turned her head around, she regarded her with a haughty stare.

“What do you want of me?” her manner seemed to say. Then, with surprise, “Do you want me to eat?” Apparently she had never heard of such a thing as eating. It evidently seemed to her a debasing and unpoetical occupation. She stared at her mother, unblinking, as Constance asked her anxiously if she was quite through — stared in a manner that would imply that she never had any interest in food, never in all her days; and this with a big tear of

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milk slowly running out of the corner of her mouth.

Did Constance urge her to eat more, Louise shut her mouth so tight that it was no bigger than a tiny pink button. Then, if Constance argued seriously with her, she would condescend to take a dainty nibble, but with mincings and graces. You would not recognize her for the same stolid trencherman who disposed of soup, fish, and meats so vociferously. She put on the fine-lady airs of one who ate only a little fruit by moonlight now and again, airs which would deceive the elect; and then suddenly she made up her mind once for all that she had finished, done with food, over with it for good and all. No more eating for her as long as she lives in the world. The thought of it revolted her. How is it that there are people who eat?

Then, when Constance left her, so replete that she turned away her head at the thought of one drop more, when after fifteen minutes Constance went back to see what she was doing, it was very easy to read Louise's thoughts,

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for she acted out all the things that occupied her mind. Her big blue eyes stared around the ceiling. She was the picture of a placid and well-fed baby. She would not eat any more if you offered it to her, but she was thinking to herself, thinking out loud, for her little mouth was working up and down rhythmically. She was pretending that she was still eating; she was thinking about the happy procession of meals that are still to march past her, to-day and to-morrow. Father and mother had no place in her heart. She did not know her hands belonged to her. But already there was one thought in her little head, and that was food. She played at eating when she was awake, and as her mother went to her at night, to make sure that she was snug and tucked in, she nestled in her little bed at her approach. A gentle murmur would come to her mother's ear. It was the smacking of little lips. Asleep, Louise was dreaming of Constance. No wonder, when Louise thought of her day and night, sleeping and awake, that Constance grew to

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believe that she must play Providence to her baby.

By watching so anxiously and so constantly, Constance found out easily enough what the things were Louise wanted. When Louise was neither hungry nor cold nor in pain, she would cry, as the nurse had said, to be taken up; and Constance found that she wanted to be taken up not because she was tired lying still, but because she was lonely. In her obscure little soul, that hardly knew the difference between darkness and light, knew no difference between one person and another, that did not even know her own hands belonged to her, there was a deep desire to be held in the arms of the big creatures that came and bent over her crib. She was lonely, that was it. She wanted people, big, strong people, to take her little body in their arms.

Not all little babies are lonely. There are a few gay, contented spirits who lie uncomplaining in their cribs if they can only have their positions changed once in a while. But most babies

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are like Louise ; almost as keen as the desire for food is their desire to have some one near them. It is born with them into the world.

There 's no sentiment about this. Foundlings, well cared for in healthy institutions, die for want of brooding. To make them live, those who govern such institutions have found it necessary to find foster-mothers, and they will thrive under comparatively bad conditions, whereas they die in faultless institutions where there is nothing lacking but mothers.

Every day Constance understood better the shapeless, vague world in which her little daughter lived, and every day added something to this world for Louise. Very soon she would stop crying at the sound of footsteps. That meant people, and people meant that she was going to have her heart's desire,— that she was going to be taken up in comforting arms. She would stop crying if some one merely walked through the room, and then take up her cry where she had laid it down, as was her custom. She would break a cry neatly in two in the middle, be

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quiet for several seconds, and finish it on exactly the same key.

As soon as Constance understood that her baby cried for loneliness, she wanted, of course, to keep her from being lonely forevermore. She couldn't bear to deny Louise in her instinctive outreaching for human sympathy. But Louise wanted more than human sympathy, just as every baby does. What she wanted was to have some one dancing attendance on her all the time; and this Louise would have had but for John.

For John had been reading books — following up his scientific habit of mind. As soon as he had perceived that the baby was a phenomenon important enough to deserve scientific attention, he read the treatises on the subject. He discovered that the nerves of infants were excessively susceptible to noise ; that the first requirement of the infant is sleep ; that under no consideration should its natural tendency for sleep be interrupted ; that the excitements of the world were too much for its immature intelligence ; in short, that the only thing to do if

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you want a well baby was to leave it absolutely alone in a clean, sunlit, hygienic room. If it wailed, it should be carefully looked over by an intelligent and unsympathetic attendant, and if there was no legitimate cause for its plaint, it should then be allowed to wail and expand its lungs, as the book said. Constance, of course, had already gone through all these books, but the thing that she remembered from her reading was that judgment should be used by the mother in the application of rules.

One day John came in with his customary question as to what the baby was crying about.

“She wants her mother,” said Constance with pride, and took up Louise, who, according to custom, stopped crying instantly.

“Has she cried any to-day?” asked John.

“Not till now,” said Constance.

“You’re cutting off her exercise hour, are n’t you?” said John. His question had the tone of command.

“I don’t like to hear her cry,” replied Constance.

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“No more do I,” said John, “but we must n’t let our feelings spoil the health of our child.” He quoted unconsciously from the book.

“I like to hold her,” said Constance.

“A child is not a toy,” said John, quoting again, “simply to amuse its parents.”

Then Constance unfolded what she had learned about Louise’s little spirit.

“She’s such a little baby, and the world’s such a big place, and she’s so helpless; and, after all, she only wants so few things, to eat and sleep with regularity—”

“And to be left alone!” said John.

“She wants to be held in her mother’s arms. She feels when she’s alone in her little crib as I would if I were drifting out in the middle of the ocean in a boat, with only sky and sea around, and nobody to help me.”

“Nonsense!” said John. “She does n’t know anything about it.”

And here Constance intrenched herself after the time-honored fashion of mothers.

“A mother knows better what her baby

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wants than any one else in the world," said she with dignity.

"Oh, yes," said John with cheerful sarcasm, "a six-weeks-old mother knows a great deal more what her child needs than the doctors who have given it a life's study."

"Indeed she does!" Constance agreed heartily.

The atmosphere was becoming tense.

"She's so helpless!" said Constance. "Poor little thing!"

John looked at Louise, cuddled peacefully in her mother's neck, gazing with round, unseeing eyes over her mother's shoulder, in the sheer comfort of animal warmth and the security of grown-up arms around her. John very suddenly found he had a new idea.

"Tell me something, Constance," he asked. "Does she ever lift her voice that you and the nurse don't immediately scuttle in to her bedside?"

"Of course not," said Constance. "That's what I'm here for."

"Just so. You're here and the nurse is here,

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and you both spend all your time in trying to find out what she wants, don't you?"

"I do my best to be a good mother," said Constance stiffly.

"Well, tell me, now, doesn't that kid get mostly what she wants? Does n't she have every little caprice satisfied, if she can make you understand what she wants, and don't you lie in wait to try to surprise a new one, and gloat over it when you find it?"

To this Constance answered with logic, "Babies grow up very fast."

John turned a quizzical eye upon his offspring.

"Helpless!" said he. "Not much!" But seeing that the atmosphere was becoming cloudy, and remembering that after all, as he said, Constance was only a six-weeks-old mother, and not very strong, he soothed her with, "Perhaps you're right—of course you know a great deal more about her than I do," although deep down in his masculine heart he felt that, from a scientific point of view, this was n't altogether true.

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The next Sunday afternoon was the nurse's day out. Constance was asked to go for a walk.

"It'll do you good," John urged. "You owe it to the baby to be out as much in the open air as you can. I'll take care of her. There's nothing to be done for her, is there, till she has to be fed again?"

He felt adequately prepared to do this, and as Louise was lying peacefully sleeping in her carriage on the piazza, he took a book and sat down near his child. After Constance had gone out of the gate, he put down his book and looked cautiously around. No one was in sight. He tiptoed to the carriage and looked down on his baby. It was the first time that they had ever been alone together. He stood above her, realizing that this little thing, lying there sleeping, was his very own child. There was a certain intimacy in being there alone, with no fear of mother or nurse coming in. It was the first time in the life of his child that any responsibility concerning her had fallen on him. A sense of the greatness of the trust lifted him to a height of affection and awe

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he had n't known before. For a moment he partook of that affection which at times makes every young mother look like a madonna,—the feeling of how little everything else mattered if only the little thing might grow up well and happy. Louise stirred in her sleep, stretched out a pink hand, opened large blue eyes, and stared placidly up in her father 's face. John regaled himself for a moment by exchanging glances. They looked at each other for a long moment, until John 's conscience drove him tiptoeing away. It was against the rules to disturb your baby. He sat down out of sight of Louise, and opened his book.

Louise lay quiet. Usually, when people went away, they came back. She gave him his chance. Then, when she realized that she had been deserted, she opened her mouth and told the world at large about her recent disappointment. She started in on a plaintive note which tore at John 's heart. He wondered if it might not be the pin.

Cautiously and on tiptoe he went over to investigate. It was not the pin. As soon as he bent over her, Louise cut off her wail, and waited. He



“I’m not going to have my child explode”

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adjusted her covers with a careful hand, and sat down again.

At this second desertion, indignation arose in Louise's breast. She told all whom it might concern that she had a cruel parent who had deserted her in a strange land. Disappointment was in her tone, and anger, but there was also a note of touching desolation, and this went to John's heart.

“Hang it!” he said. “It is n’t a colic, or she would n’t have stopped when I touched her. Constance is right. The little thing wants to be taken up.”

Here Louise held her breath for a moment. John could just catch sight of a red face turning to purple. Then she let out a mighty roar, which lasted an unbelievable time, held her breath again, and repeated the roar. John sat tense in his chair.

“Oh, well, you know,” said he, “that *can’t* be good for her! Here,” he went on, “I’m not going to have my child explode, for all the doctors that ever wrote books. If you want to be taken up—come on!”

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So he took her up and laid her over his shoulder as he had seen Constance do. With a little sob of satisfaction she ducked down her head on his shoulder. He patted her, while her sobs diminished and finally stopped. Almost without knowing what he did he began singing to her and rocking gently in his chair.

This is the way Constance found them when she returned.

“Aha!” said she, “so she made you take her up, did she?”

“She sounded like colic!” said John.

“Colic!” said Constance. “She’s been a willful little thing all day. She’s getting as spoiled as anything!”

“Oh, well,” said John, “you have to use your judgment.” He rather liked the feel of Louise’s head on his neck, and the nestling of her little body — although his arms were terribly cramped; for he had n’t dared to move, for fear of breaking her, since he had taken her up.

That was the afternoon that it dawned definitely on Constance that, as John said, far from

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being helpless, Louise could dominate the entire household, from kitchen to attic, by sheer strength of lung and persistence of will. For very soon Louise passed the borderland of the legitimate wish to be mothered, to a desire for continued amusement. But by now Constance had taken her daughter's measure. She saw the trend of things—to the walking of floors at night. That could not be. So Constance began a course of discipline.

After that there was an almost daily conflict of wills between "the helpless little child" and her mother. Sometimes Constance won, but often Louise did. And here it was that John turned traitor to his earlier training; for since that afternoon alone with Louise he had a different attitude toward her. When Louise would lie calling loudly for human sympathy in her crib, it was John who said, "Why don't you take her up?" and Constance who replied, with New England firmness, "I shall let her cry it out!"

But New England firmness could n't always

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prevail against Louise—for when a baby really fixes her mind on being held, there's nothing for it but to take her up.

It was on an afternoon when Louise had won that a sentimental visitor appeared. Constance was sitting with the triumphant infant on her lap.

“Let me take her, dear, helpless little thing!” said the visitor.

“Helpless!” returned Constance, “helpless! In a state of civilization, babies are n't helpless.”

She scrutinized her daughter's round pink face.

“I don't think,” she said, “that I know any one that can help themselves as ably as you can, Louise.”



“Let me take her”

V

THE FIRST BOTTLE

THERE is a drama which is enacted in every home in this country where there is a baby. It is called The First Bottle. In some households, it occurs very early in the life of the Little Person, right at the very start, and then everything goes well — or it does n't.

Before this moment arrived in the life of Constance, Louise was seven months old.

I think from the first moment Constance knew what the matter was and that the first little vague fretting of Louise announced to her that her day was over. And though she knew in her heart of hearts that the fateful hour had struck, she put by the moment of facing it as long as she could. The world in those days was full of thorns. When John would say complacently : —

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“What a hungry little pig she is; she eats harder and more all the time!” Constance would wince.

A mother may blind herself about such matters. She may tell herself that her Louise is getting ready to cut a tooth — that is why she tries to put her whole fist in her mouth. Teething in the world of a little baby covers a multitude of sins. There is nothing, as Constance found out, from colic to temper that will not make older women say, “It’s her teeth!”

But that was not what the scales said. Like all properly reared children, Louise was weighed every week — well, nearly every week, if you must have the truth.

There came a time when the regular gain of ounces lessened with sickening regularity. But still Constance would n’t believe it. She did n’t say it out loud even to herself. She looked at it face to face for the first time when a neighbor, who poked in a kindly gray head every little while to see how things were going, and because her grandmotherly heart felt the need of a little baby-

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worship, said, — and she said it quite cheerfully too, as if it were not a terrible thing :—

“ She’s been kind of fretty of late, has n’t she? I don’t believe but what she is n’t getting enough to eat.”

“ I thought it might be her teeth,” said Constance.

“ Oh, that is n’t her teeth,” announced this mother of grown sons. “ That baby’s hungry! Tell your mamma, darling, ‘ I’se hungry, yes I is.’ ”

How can people say such things out loud and with a smile! Her baby hungry, and she, poor mother, powerless to help it. The next time Louise was weighed, she had n’t gained. Constance went to the doctor. He told her what she knew all along, — Louise was hungry. He was as matter-of-fact as if this were not a crisis in the life of Constance and Louise.

Of course she knew that this day must come. Indeed, she did not dread it so very much. After a certain time, the bottle must take the place of a baby’s mother. It is the natural order of

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things, just as in time bread and butter and beef-juice again supersede the bottle. But now the actual moment had come ; the peril of it, that had been lurking in the background, a possible thing always, suddenly seemed the largest thing in life. As Constance passed the drug-store the harmless, meek-looking glass bottle displayed in the window seemed an engine of destruction. She hated it. She hated the cows which passed by the door of an evening, for they, too, might bring sickness and death. Constance passed the evening reading, and the more she learned the more frightened she was. She had always known that babies sicken and sometimes die at this time, but she had n't realized the magnitude of the danger.

A feeling of awful inadequacy to her task rushed over Constance. She had n't felt so helpless and so alone since that awful moment when the trained nurse left the fate of Louise in her untutored hands. John had helped her then with his very presence. Now he was nothing to lean on. He had no experience in the weaning of

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babies. While he was sympathetic in the matter of germs, he also remarked : —

“ All babies have to be weaned sometime, don’t they ? ” But he had one suggestion of value, “ Why don’t you ask your mother about it ? ”

Now there is a great gulf fixed between the rearing of babies in this generation and the last. There is hardly a conscientious young mother living who does not wonder how she and her brothers and sisters lived to grow up, reared as they were in the dark ages. More than once Constance had found her mother unsympathetic about what she termed “ new-fangled notions.” However, it seemed to Constance that this must be different. Then too, older women forget so much. To vital questions like, “ How old was I when I cut my first tooth ? ” one was too apt to receive answers like, “ Mercy, Constance, how do you expect me to remember after all this time ! ” Surely her mother would remember more about this. For Constance felt sure that if she lived to be three hundred years

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old she would never forget the awful sinking of the heart she felt when the doctor calmly confirmed her fears.

But all Constance's mother had to offer was, "You're going to wean the baby, are you? I thought you'd have to soon. It will be much better for you, too."

Much better for her! She could think of that with a menacing, germ-laden cow mooing triumphantly as it passed the house!

"Did you have much trouble when you weaned us?"

"Trouble? Why—I don't remember any special *trouble*. Some babies take to a bottle easier than others, I suppose. My children were like others about that. Yes, I think I did have some trouble with John—was it John?—no, I think it was Henry—yes, your brother Henry I think it was. He simply wouldn't take the bottle. We had to feed him with a cup and spoon. But he did very nicely in the end. I remember how cunning he looked with his little cup and spoon."

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That is the kind of thing grandmothers remember,—how cunning they looked with the little cup and spoon! But it is n't what poor anxious young mothers want to know.

It all sounds rather humorous from the outside. What a tempest in a teapot, to be sure, and what tragic airs over such a common thing as the weaning of a baby! But it is not funny to the young mother; for she knows, simple or clever, instructed or ignorant, she knows deep inside her that this simple, everyday occurrence is a matter in reality of life and death, and in cases where it is not a matter of life and death, it is a matter of sickness and health; and there was Constance, so ignorant and so young in the face of such big forces, which she understood so little. It was for her to do, and she had to do it alone. No one could help her. And even though her anxiety communicated itself to the rest of the household, it did n't touch them deeply, not even John,—he did not know. The responsibility was n't on their shoulders.

So there was Constance preparing to make

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the awful jump in the dark. The drama of The First Bottle was an actuality.

The house seemed full of imminent danger. It was packed closest in the nursery, and from there it trailed out over all the rest of the house and its dwellers like a fog. It even penetrated into the kitchen, where the bottles were being boiled. How long does it take to make them sterile? Constance wondered. She went and looked it up in the book. Every receptacle that was to hold milk, every spoon that was to ladle out sugar or lime-water, she boiled. For the moment, the world seemed populated wholly by inimical germs. And as to the harmless-looking milk in the sealed bottles, why, that has become a very witch's brew. It was supposed to come from a clean barn, but how can one be sure? The man that milked that cow might be coming down with scarlet fever, and besides that, cow's milk might not agree with Louise anyway.

Constance's horizon shrank to a pin-point. Neither wars nor panics could have interested her. She was arranging the baby's first bottle of

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what is so well termed “artificial food.” What she wanted to know was, were those bottles sterilized or not? She did not care what merry-makings took place without her. Let all the world go if they wished; it did n’t interest Constance. She was occupied with weighty matters.

What formula should one begin on? It sounded so very simple in theory; it was so difficult in practice! The theory goes this way: of top milk take a certain percentage and to this add a certain prescribed amount of water and sugar. Preserve scrupulous cleanliness of all the articles employed; bring the sacred bottles rapidly to a high temperature and cool rapidly. That was all. It is simpler than making a cake.

That is all; but there is no other simple task in the world that is so hard to get right. While she worked, Constance could hear Louise talking to herself. She was so well and happy now, and here was her own mother going deliberately to give her something that may make her sick and unhappy. It had to Constance all the terrors of a major operation.

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Nor did she receive any sympathy for her meticulous and anxious care. This measuring of anxious ounces is a new thing, you see, and is therefore looked upon with suspicion by the older generation, and by a good part of the younger.

On the piazza the gray-haired neighbor and Constance's mother were talking. Her mother's voice floated to her:—

“Gracious! Life's hardly worth living nowadays, the fuss that's made over every little thing, what with boiled water and sterilized milk! I gave the baby a drink from the faucet the other day, and one would have thought I was trying to murder the child, the way its mother acted. She gives it boiled water, if you please, boiled and kept in a bottle by itself!”

“In my day,” said the neighbor, “when we got the baby's bottle ready, we put some good rich milk and some water together and sweetened it till it tasted good.”

It was a beautifully simple way. If the baby had a colic afterwards, one could tell that it had

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not agreed with it ; if it did not have a colic, one might assume that it had. The older generation can hardly forgive the mothers of this for their new ways, while the mothers of this generation listen to this artless prattle with a shudder. Such talk seems to the poor, anxious creatures only a degree removed from the placid discussion of child murder.

“Yes,” went on Louise’s grandmother, “Constance is acting just like a hen with its head cut off. One would think to look at her she was getting ready to poison the baby.”

“The work young mothers make of babies nowadays! It’s a wonder there’s a child lives to grow up, with the sterilizing this and the sterilizing that. Thank God, my babies were all raised before germs were invented. Whenever I see an article on germs, I skip it,” the neighbor added proudly. “I don’t want to know anything about the horrid things ; they make me nervous.”

“They’d make you more nervous if you had a young baby in the house,” said the grandmo-

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ther with spirit. "Look at Constance, now. Of course, weaning a baby is a little trying, to be sure ; but if she could get a kettle large enough, Constance would boil this whole house and everybody in it, to be sure everything was sterile. But there's one thing she can't sterilize ; that's the baby's thumb. And I'm perfectly sure if she keeps on she'll upset that child, pottering and fussing as she does."

At last the mixture was prepared with all accuracy. Constance had followed every direction and said to herself that she was going to give Louise her first bottle.

Oh, but was she ? There are two to that bargain, as Constance speedily found out. Some other member of the family must, of course, administer the dose. The choice fell on the baby's grandmother, while Constance, after the custom of young mothers in such circumstances, huddled at the other side of the closed door and listened in anguish of spirit to what went on inside.

Take one lusty baby and support it firmly with your left hand. Now take the nursing bottle in

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your right hand and insert it in the baby's mouth. That is easy enough to do, is n't it? See what happened with Louise.

She chewed on the rubber a little, and remarked "Ag-goo." But that is not what was wanted of her. A rubber nipple is n't a plaything, to be chewed on and goo-ed over.

Her grandmother now shook the bottle slightly, to give Louise some idea of what was expected of her. Warm drops of milk slid down her little face. She made no effort to swallow it. Besides, she no longer desired that rubber thing in her mouth, and spit it out. The grandmother watched her chance. Little persons like Louise are always opening their mouths; the rubber nipple was popped in again when Louise was off her guard. This time a few drops ran down her throat.

"Ah, that is what it is in here for, is it? Something to eat!" Like the fair-minded child that she was, she was willing to give it a trial. She took a tentative swallow. A queer proceeding, it was, anyway, one could see she thought. But

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she was willing to do her share, and her share consisted in tasting gingerly of that moisture into which had gone so much heart-breaking care.

“Oh, please take it, Louise!” Constance groaned in spirit. “You do not know how hard your mother’s worked! You do not know how much it means to me! Here I am behind the door, listening to you. Please, please, realize that this is your serious business in life. Please be good!”

But there never was a truer saying than that you can lead a baby to the bottle, but can’t make her drink. Louise made it plain that she did not want anything to do with it. But she must have something to do with it; that is a sure thing. She was equally sure that she would not, and as for the tenth time the bottle was patiently presented before her gaze, and in an unaware moment even slipped into her mouth, she broke forth into roars. She roared all over her; she roared with her hands and with her feet. She fought it. This was no mere coquetting with food, no fine-lady airs of a replete baby. On the contrary, she was hun-

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gry. The few drops that went down her throat were enough to remind her of that. She was hungry, and she wanted her nice soft mother, nor did she care who knew it. She wanted every one in the house to know it, and everybody in the street and in the world, and she was determined that they should.

There is a phrase known to those who write of infancy, "the baby kicked and screamed." We are so used to it that we write it and read it lightly. Ah, but have you ever watched that terrifying spectacle with your own baby? She "kicked and screamed." Indeed she did! It is a noise more terrifying than thunder. It is a more soul-racking spectacle than any one is apt to meet with in an ordinary, well-ordered life. It is awful at any time. When she kicks and screams it is always awful, but when she kicks and screams because she does n't want to be "artificially fed," — when she kicks and screams because it is her own mother she wants, the horror is intensified.

Every one had sympathy enough, then. No

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one could hear that tumult unmoved. John, you may be sure, walked the floor in an agony of helplessness. Louise's grandmother dropped her rocking-chair attitude of mind, and as for poor Constance,—she *could n't bear* that cry.

And there is another of those phrases that we have used so often that their meaning has worn off and left them smooth and insignificant. Now Constance learned the primitive meaning of those words, for she simply *could n't bear it*.

Then darkness brooded over the household, long after Louise, replete, tranquil, had forgotten about it.

All the family but Louise knew that the same scene must be gone over to-morrow and the day after. There was nothing for it but starvation. Louise, for once, would have to give in sometime. Who knew what tears were to be shed before her spirit would be broken by hunger?

Next day, the bottle was presented to her tentatively, humbly. All the household was unquiet; they walked up and down and asked each other, “Are they giving it to her now?”

The First Bottle

One would think it was ether at least that was being administered, instead of a bottle of harmless milk. With all precaution and tact, the bottle was put before her. One would expect, of course, a cry of indignation. But Louise had forgotten all about it. She did not remember that this is what made her doubt that there was justice in the world yesterday, and which made her voice her angry distrust of all her world.

Without any warning she took it as if this was the food to which she was accustomed. She ate placidly, her eyes roving around the ceiling. She filled herself full, and talked for a while afterwards, contentedly,— that charming talk which is the little baby's poem in praise of food. It means :—

“ I have eaten. How bright the sun shines ! I am full of food. How good is the world ! I have eaten so I do not want to eat any more. How pleasant are the faces about me ! ”

And meditating on how pleasant is the stomach when full, Louise fell asleep. The drama of The First Bottle was over.

VI

THE BABY AND THE THEORY

LOUISE was brought up on a system and a theory. The system prescribed was a cast-iron thing. It told at what time Louise was to be put to bed and at what time she should take her naps in the daytime, at what hours she should eat and how long, and it went into the most minute details about things. She was not to be permitted to go to sleep while eating, for instance; the book also went into the matter of toilet,—how warm the water should be and how warm the room in which she was bathed. There was a neat little floating bath thermometer and a wooden shield provided for the finding of the exact temperature; and when Constance's mother remarked at the sight of this orderly little apparatus, "When you were young, I tried the water like this," and, suiting the action to the words, the baby's grand-

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mother bared her arm, plunged in her elbow to test the temperature,—“It answers,” said she, “every purpose,”—Constance shuddered secretly and later told John about it.

During the first year of Louise’s life Constance had a great deal to tell John about how little grandmothers knew about babies.

All this system was written down neatly in a little book. There was nothing you could not find out in this book. There was information about a portable rubber bath on page twenty-three, and information concerning the extraction of foreign objects from ear or nose was to be found on page sixty-four. Indeed, this valuable book was a complete guide to the unknown land of babyhood for the young mother. It told what cries meant ; described accurately the angry cry and the cry of colic ; in fact it told one all about babies except the one great fact, and that was the personal equation. It described just babies,—not your baby, but the sort of babies that grow in hospitals and institutions. It gave unnumbered rules about how to rear up a per-

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fectly healthy young baby, — all the rules in the world indeed ; but there was one thing it did not tell, and that was how to break these rules to make them suit your own child. In fact, it told you about the theory of being a good parent, but nothing about the art of it, and between the theory and the art is a long cry.

So much for the system. A theory was also to be found in the book, and it went this way : A well baby is always good. When a child frets and cries it has something the matter with it. If your child cries, examine it carefully ; see that its clothes are straight ; change its position. If it has been recently fed and its food has agreed with it, it should presently stop crying. Perhaps they are cries of anger ; in that case, after having made it comfortable, go out of the room and permit it to cry ; it will soon cease. A perfectly well-brought-up child does not cry.

This invaluable book was also very explicit on the faults of parents and guardians. Bouncing children up and down and jiggling them around, bobbing their little heads off, swaying them from

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side to side,—the book described the effect on the nervous system of all these tricks.

Consequently a trip abroad in a public conveyance became a frequent torture to Constance. Wherever she went it seemed as though she saw little babies being maltreated,—being bounced and jiggled and trotted and twisted until it was a wonder their little heads did n't come completely off. She had hard work not to ask people to stop, and the worst of it was that all the ladies of the older generation were possessed with the desire to do similar things to poor little Louise.

It may be a hard thing to be a grandmother in this generation and not be allowed to rock your grandchildren to sleep any more or pick them up and squeeze them just as they are dropping off; there is undoubtedly a tragedy in this—it has been written about; but Constance thought that the real tragedy lay in the lot of the young mother who had to see so many things happen to her young child that she knew were so very bad for her.

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When Louise was a very little baby, things were easier; she was mostly asleep, and if she was n't actually asleep you could say with truth that she was just waking up or just going off. For this with eating occupied the most of Louise's life. But, as she grew into a real little person and one fine day left off long clothes altogether and popped into short dresses,—a person who sat up ably and solidly, her fat, inadequate legs stretched out straight and rather too wide apart for elegance, people would come into the room and snatch her up without so much as a “by your leave,” to Constance, or to Louise either, for that matter. They would chunk-chunk her up and down upon knees, twiddle eye-glasses before her eyes in a way that was enough to turn any child cross-eyed, and talk into her ear in a high staccato, unnatural voice. All these proceedings drove Constance almost to the verge of desperation. She knew able, cool-headed young mothers capable of saying to their older friends,—yes, and even to their mothers-in-law,—

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“Would you kindly put the baby down? I don’t think that is good for her.”

Young mothers who without turning a hair could say, “How would you like to have a great giant take you on her knee and bounce you up and down at the rate you are doing to the baby?” or remonstrate with words such as these:—

“I have always kept my baby quiet; she is not accustomed to being squeaked and cackled at.”

Of course, such sayings made enemies, but what is an enemy more or less to a young mother compared to the life of her child? And yet, somehow, these words of admonition refused to come.

“Coward!” Constance would say to herself. “Worse than coward — fool! Now is the time to take your baby from these women who are upsetting all your theories and injuring your child!”

But the cowardly other self of Constance would answer, —

“She’ll put her down in a minute, anyway.

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Poor thing! She has n't seen her little grandson at all ; he lives so far west."

And so the words that should have been spoken never got said, though Constance used to rehearse them, and when people asked to see the baby and there was no getting out of it, she would bring Louise in, all ready to say in the most natural way in the world, in a voice not calculated to give offense,—

"Oh, by the way, don't bounce the baby!"

And the next thing she knew there would be Louise being tossed up to the sky and Constance standing mute and unhappy with not a word to say, thinking to herself miserably the words of the little book :—

"How would you like it if you were a baby? Has it no rights, not even the right to a life tranquil and happy? Must it be made a toy, all for the folly of older people?"

But, alas, the words of remonstrance refused to come. All Constance could do was to complain to John about how little older women understood babies, and John would sympathize,

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agreeing as he did with what the little book said. Then he would ask,—

“But why don’t you stop them, Constance? Why do you let them do it?” and Constance could only answer miserably the pusillanimous words that she “did n’t like to offend people.”

“Well then,” John would say, “why do you bring the baby in at all?”

“I can’t very well help it,” Constance would answer, knowing deep down in her heart that she could not help showing off her baby. And there you have the humiliating truth of it. Many and many a time she might have made excuses to keep Louise out of the room, but Louise was so fascinating and pretty that even if she had to get bounced — and Constance sometimes made believe she would n’t be — Constance could not have helped bringing her in to show to a waiting world what a wonderful baby she was.

So you see that even here the theory and the system were nicked and scarred.

“Never let any stranger,” said the system, “play with your child. Never permit anybody

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to kiss your child. Discharge a nurse girl who is found doing this.” And yet Constance had to confess that not for anything in the world would she have discharged nice, clean Scotch Jane, and Jane was frequently found kissing the dear one. She tried to check her own mother’s propensity for what John called by the vulgar name of “slobbering over the baby,” by a stern and undemonstrative manner toward Louise when the baby’s grandmother was there, but all the good this did was that the baby received an extra share of kisses from its grandparent, who exclaimed:—

“Mercy, Constance, don’t you *ever* kiss your own baby? I don’t know what mothers are made of nowadays. There is n’t any comfort in being a mother any more. Little babies need hugging and kissing just as much as they need food; they love it.”

Well did Constance know that this was true. Many a time did Louise beguile her into breaking the rules, but in her mother’s presence, she quoted from the book,—

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“‘Because a child likes a thing is no sign that it is good for it. You would not give a child all the sugar it wanted merely because it demanded it.’” To which the baby’s grandmother merely replied,—

“Fiddle-dee-dee! I have brought up five healthy children and I had all the comfort with them that I wanted. I don’t believe that a baby was ever hurt yet by having its mother or its grandmother kiss it.”

What encouraged Constance in her undimmed belief in both theory and system was the way that Louise responded to it. She went to sleep like a little clock,—no rocking for her. Five minutes after one had put her down she had cooed herself off. Even the skeptical grandmother had to admit this. She did everything per schedule. Leaving her alone when she cried, even, worked, and very soon she scarcely cried at all. At first she would lie looking at her hands or thumping her feet up and down, and later sat up in her carriage staring with beautiful, placid eyes at the world about her and smiling enga-

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gingly at whichever member of the family passed by. In those days Constance had to sit behind Louise with her hands at her back to keep herself from holding her more than the book said would be good for her.

You see Louise was responsible after all for some of it herself for letting one think that she could grow up like a little John Doe, or foundling asylum baby, instead of Louise Greatrax, a real little person; and it was no wonder if John and Constance came to have a somewhat fetish-like worship for that little book and thought that their baby was well because they followed all the rules laid down therein, instead of understanding that Louise lived according to rule because she was well and also because she had not yet found out that there was any other way to live.

John and Constance were sitting one night discussing the future of Louise.

“I don’t think,” said Constance, “that I want her to be a college woman after all.”

John raised his head from the paper he was reading.

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“What do you propose to do?” he asked.

“I think a good boarding-school,” Louise began, “makes a girl more feminine.”

Now John had recently read a paper on the extravagant doings of girls in boarding-schools.

“I don’t agree with you at all,” he said. “I am surprised at you, Constance. I think that girls in boarding-schools learn to be vain; I think our boarding-schools in this country—”

“What,” asked Constance, “do you know about boarding-schools in this country? I went to a boarding-school.”

“There would be a whole generation’s difference in the ideas of girls in boarding-schools by that time.”

“The same is true of a college.” Constance began to be heated. “I don’t want a strong-minded girl who knows more than her mother.”

“If she were a boy I would want her to know more than me,” said John.

“Oh, I know you are very noble.” There was a fine edge of sarcasm to Constance’s tone. “But I like a girl who is a girl, and so do you.

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I think that being a college-bred woman spoils a girl's chances for a good marriage."

"If you are going to put ideas in Louise's head," John remonstrated, "about getting married — There's nothing in my mind more disgusting than a girl brought up to search for a husband."

Constance flushed.

"You know I don't mean that," she cried.

And here, you see, were all the materials for a fine little hot quarrel, had not the innocent cause of it cut it short by a loud and deafening cry. Louise's cries were no longer the little impersonal "Wah! Wah! Wah!" of babyhood. They had emerged from the hunger-song period to a poignant human note calculated to wring the heart of any parent. Constance looked at her watch. It was only quarter past eight, and Louise's supper hour was not until ten. Louise had gone to bed like a good baby at her usual time. She never woke up until shortly before ten o'clock, and then she didn't cry; she never cried evenings at all. Louise and John looked at each other.

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“What do you suppose is the matter?” their eyes questioned.

Again Louise lifted up her voice. Constance went into the room, straightened her clothes as per schedule, turned her over slightly, and left her alone. And now the crying began in earnest,—a loud, persistent cry.

“She has a colic,” announced Constance, her eyes wide.

It had come at last, then, that dreaded moment, for not since the trained nurse left had this well-regulated infant suffered from this blight of babyhood. Constance knew exactly what to do. She had read what to do a thousand times in the book,—a hot-water bottle was what she needed and a few teaspoonfuls of warm water; rubbing the little hands and feet, too, was good.

Meanwhile, John, tormented past all endurance, went in and lighted a lamp in the room where his child was. Upon this she ceased crying, now and then drawing in her breath in a heart-rending little sob like a real grown-up person, but she smiled at John engagingly through

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her sobs; large and beautiful tears stood in her eyes. She kicked and struggled and finally sat upright, still smiling at her father in an entrancing fashion. Then she pointed at a bright calendar that adorned the dresser, then taking it in her hands she kissed the infant pictured on it. This was her latest accomplishment.

Thus did Constance find her husband and child engaged when she returned with hot water. There was no question about it,—the baby was n't sick and yet she had cried. It was perplexing; the more she thought about it the more perplexing it became. Louise continued to play with her parents and the calendar until it was her supper-time, then she ate largely and went to sleep and slept soundly all night.

They talked about it gravely at lunch next day. The baby's grandmother was present, and as if to give an exhibition of her performance, Louise, who was taking her noonday nap, awoke and wept in the same heartrending fashion.

“She did it this morning, too,” said Constance. “It is n't that she just wants to be taken up, for I

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took her up and still she cried." She went out of the room and brought Louise in, who, after smiling at her family, resumed her plaints.

"What do you suppose can be the matter? Do you think I had better tell the doctor to come?" asked John anxiously.

"I don't know," replied Constance.

"There's nothing in the book that tells?" John questioned further.

But here the exasperated grandmother looked from one to the other.

"I've seen you two look up what's the matter with the baby in that book times enough," said she. "What that child wants is to try her legs. Come to gran'ma, precious!"

Yes, incredible as it may seem, what Louise wanted was to bounce herself up and down on her two fat feet, which had long ago become more or less docile at her commands. Louise wanted to bounce herself up and down more than any visitor of the older generation had ever dared to do. Suddenly she had awakened to the realization of the true use of legs.

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“Yes,” continued the grandmother, “you may frown as you please, Constance, and you may bring the child up according to Hoyle, but she will have character just the same, and a child of character has to express her opinions. A book too big for any house to hold would have to be printed to give all the reasons that a child of character would have for opening its mouth. Would n’t it, my precious? The first thing,” continued this grandmother, her pent-up flood-gates of speech now let loose, “the first thing to do with a rule for any human being, is to learn how to break it, and if you don’t learn how to do it yourselves, this blessed baby will have to teach you.”

And to this John and Constance had nothing to say, for there really did seem to be something in it.

VII

THE PASSING OF THE SHADOW

CONSTANCE was out of spirits. She had a large number of good reasons for it, and she counted them over as she sat and sewed. In the first place, though this she did n't give as her really good reason, it was the nurse's afternoon out and Constance had been invited on an especially alluring expedition that involved walking with a party of friends she liked, and they had all gone off laughing and she had had to stay at home and take care of Louise.

Now things in books happen differently from things in real life, and book mothers are perhaps nicer than real mothers, but this I don't know, for there are certain tendernesses, sweet looks, appreciations of dear and foolish little awkward attempts of babies to be like people that not the wisest writer in the world can ever give ; depths of devotion too, and profundities of love that one

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can talk about for a long time and can only say the same thing over again, which is, perhaps, why literature about motherhood has such a monotony,—it is the eternal attempt to express a thing that is so beautiful and so precious and yet so commonplace that no one can quite put it into words.

But the book mothers always find their dearest pleasure in life in being with their children, whereas the real mothers occasionally hear the sunshine calling and the wind blowing and the voices of gay comrades without, and would like for a minute to forget they have duties at home and be off as free as they were — how long ago was it? Twenty years, or only a matter, perhaps, of twenty months? They want — these real mothers — to be up and gone just when the mood takes them, and then a little hand clings to a skirt, a little voice tries to say an inarticulate word that means a drink of water, and the girl has gone out and, in fact, your real mother, like Constance, just has to stay at home when she does n't feel like staying at home, and for the mo-

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ment the ever-present task of seeing that her offspring does n't eat some mortal object from the carpet has got on her nerves, because, after all, there is not so very much difference between a girl of twenty-three and a mother of twenty-three. One should not feel that way, of course ; the ideal emotion should be that there could be no task in life ever quite so pleasant as tending the beloved Little Person. And yet — and yet — the most beloved Little Person gets fretful now and then, and rooms seem small and the world is wide and the pleasures that you desire for yourself are such normal ones and innocent that it makes you cross to sit at home and sew even if you have got a nice piazza to sew on.

That was one reason that Constance felt what her mother would have called "grumpy" and had what John would have called a "grouch." And then there was John ; he had n't gone off to work that afternoon in the best of humors, and was it Constance's fault, she would like to have known ? Not a bit of it ! The head clerk had made some mistakes, and the new office-boy was inefficient,

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and John had brought the whole office home with him and grumbled about it,—just as if Constance had done it all. Did she blame him because the new cook had n't broiled the steak in the proper way? Had she told him anything about it? She had n't.

Then there was another thing,—there was no doubt about it whatever,—Louise was outgrowing her clothes, and Constance had seen some charming embroidered things which would have exactly become Louise, and some little caps with rosettes on the side which she could n't have afforded. And there it was! You were always seeing just the things you wanted and that you couldn't afford! You were always scheming and economizing and planning to get them—not for yourself, mind you—and then the gas bill would come in, bigger than you expected, or there had to be a new ton of coal at an unreasonable moment. Why did money always have to be spent for ugly things like coal and nasty-smelling things like gas when the world abounded in charmingly embroidered frocks

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which were just the thing for Louise, not to mention caps with especially adorable rosettes made to adorn small heads?

And there was still another thing; did John care a whoop whether Louise had these things in which she looked so well? No! Had n't he said only the other day, "Sometimes, Constance, you make me think of a big girl playing with a doll, the way you dress that child up. I like her best in rompers; she's happier and more comfortable that way." It would be a nice thing in this world if men could realize that there was a time for rompers and a time for embroideries and rosettes. The world is undoubtedly a hard and unsympathetic place for a woman who can't have everything she wants exactly when she wants it!

You will please think that all this was a sort of soliloquy that wandered without sequence, as such things do, through Constance's brain as she sat and sewed. Louise, meantime, crawled about the room. I say "sat and sewed"; I don't tell the truth when I say it, for Constance sewed

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now and then. Yes, there is no doubt about it, our houses are very ill adapted for little babies. Now Louise tugged at the fringe of a table-cover and almost pulled down upon her a pile of books and an inkstand. Constance left her sewing and made a dash for her offspring and diverted her attention by rolling up and down a woolly lamb. It took some time, because there is a certain fascination in pulling at fringe. You pull and something gives ; you pull some more and it gives you a sense of power, and you want to keep on and you don't in the least see why you should n't.

That is one of the hardest things in being a baby,—there are so many things in the world that you must stop doing.

Probably Constance had substituted woolly lambs for the pulling down of disastrous table-cloths some hundreds of times, often without thinking what she was doing, often with a certain humor in the situation, and very much more often because it was just fun — sheer fun — to sit on the floor and play with Louise and

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watch her little awkward hands trying to do grown-up things. But to-day it didn't amuse this unnatural mother at all; it bored her. If she had to stay at home, she wanted to sit quietly and sew.

The next time she looked — well — the woolly-lamb trick had served its purpose as it had often done before. Constance resumed her sewing and her thoughts. Then she looked up, guided by that extra sense a mother develops; what was Louise doing? Doing what she knew very well she ought not to! — cramming that woolly lamb into her mouth! Yes, that was what that unreasonable child was about, and if there was anything she had been trained to do, it was not to eat her toys. When will a race of men be found ingenious enough to make toys for little babies, covered with digestible paint, minus wool, minus splinters, minus sharp things that cut little fingers, — toys, in fact, that a child can play with without hurting either its outward sides or its insides? There have been babies a very long time in this world and toys

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almost an equal length of time, and yet this strange discrepancy still continues to exist between toys and babies.

“No, no!” cried Constance. “Louise must n’t!” She shook her finger. Louise continued to eat her lamb. “No, no!” said Constance again. Louise continued to eat. With a sigh Constance arose, took the lamb away, and put an investigating finger into her child’s mouth to see how much of the lamb her offspring had managed to gnaw off. And at this Louise’s philosophy gave way suddenly.

It had been gently done; she had n’t been hurt, for if Constance was a bad mother that afternoon, she was n’t bad enough to let her inner impatience hurt Louise. Then, too, Louise was used to having her mouth investigated; night and morning, for that matter, it was well washed out with boric water and cotton, and she seemed to like it, and even opened her mouth of her own accord for the operation to be accomplished. But this time she chose to be hurt to the depths of her feelings, and she showed it

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by emitting a loud and disagreeable roar. Constance looked at Louise.

“ Louise,” she said solemnly and gently, but with conviction, “ if you were older, I think—I’m not sure, but I think—I should spank you ! ” And as though she understood the dire meaning of her mother’s words, Louise opened her pink mouth wider and wept. It was a most unpleasant scene.

Nor were matters made better by the appearance of the baby’s grandmother, whose first words, without any greeting to her daughter, were : —

“ What was they doing to my peshy ? Did they t’eat her g’amma’s baby bad ? Come to g’amma, darling ; g’amma knows what babies want.”

And at that moment Louise, diverted by a new person, stopped crying.

“ The thing this baby needs,” Constance’s mother continued in a different tone, “ is more cuddling. You new-fangled mothers don’t realize that, Constance.”

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Constance replied nothing. Just because her mother was n't there when the little intimate interchanges of confidence and love occurred between her and Louise, here she was being blamed for being a cold-blooded mother.

Louise ducked her little head down on the capacious shoulder which swayed gently to and fro.

“I don't think,” said Constance, “it's good for her to be joggled so, directly after a meal.”

“Well, well, Constance, have it your own way! It's your baby!” replied her mother with provoking good-humor.

“Sit down,” said Constance, a ray of hope dawning; if her mother had better success with the fretful Louise, perhaps she could have an hour of quiet in her own room.

“Oh, no,” replied her mother. “I'm just going down to the Committee of Ways and Means for the church to see about the funds for the new carpet for the aisle, you know, and I just thought I would run in and say ‘How-do-you-do?’ Peshy's been glad to see her g'amma

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even for a moment, have n't you, peshy?" And "peshy," being deposited again on the floor, wept.

The older woman looked at her grandchild with a scrutinizing eye.

"That child does n't look quite well to me," she said. "Are you sure she is well, Constance?"

A queer little shiver went down Constance's back.

"What makes you think that?" she asked.

"I don't know," answered her mother, "but somehow she does n't seem just natural to me. Her little hands seem dry."

"I think she's just a little fussy," said Constance. "But do you think I had better send for the doctor?"

"Mercy, child!" answered her mother. "How you go on! The least suggestion, and it's the doctor! Well, I'm off!" And here the baby's grandmother departed, to leave to Constance the task of comforting her offspring afresh and to demonstrate to her that a woolly lamb is not an article of diet, but meant to be rolled up and down on wheels.

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It was in this manner that the afternoon wore itself out; there was no doubt about it,—Louise was fussy; nothing pleased her; she wanted to eat the woolly lamb; clothespins, which generally were a delight to her soul, she flung from her with that ennui that only a baby knows how to express. Pat-a-cake games, she showed her mother, had no further interest for her. When Constance tried to amuse her she whimpered and indicated with great freedom that she would like to eat her woolly lamb. In fact there was no other occupation in the world that really did appeal to her.

When John came home he threw to Constance the cheering word,—

“ Well, the office has just been the dickens to-day! Everything’s gone wrong. It’s been like pulling a cat by the tail!”

Then, after about a year had elapsed, the nurse returned, refreshed from her outing, in time to put the baby to bed and give her her food. Constance and John sat down in the library. Usually this hour was one of the plea-

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santest of the day. There were mutual confidences to be exchanged ; there were little communities of interest to be talked about, small funny things to be related, and then, at the end, when the baby had had her bath and just before she was going to go to bed, Louise to be kissed.

But to-day Constance had nothing to tell, and John nothing but things that were disagreeable, and of the two Constance was the more unpleasant company, because she was making a business of keeping her mouth shut over her grievances while John more wholesomely aired his. And just as the atmosphere had got a little tense, the nurse appeared.

“ I wish you would come and look at the baby, Mrs. Greatrax,” she said. “ She won’t eat, and there’s other things about her I don’t like.”

I suppose all parents are haunted with the same thing ; I suppose that to the extent they love, so they must fear. All about you, you see little children stricken ; a child passes your house one day laughing in her carriage and a few days

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later you see a pale-faced woman in black, haggard and empty-armed, and you hug your own child to you and pray God to spare all of you.

Before this, many times the shadow had flickered for a moment and passed on; the baby had been ailing a few hours,—it had been nothing, and yet that most terrible fear had for a moment and for light cause touched both John and Constance, and each in a different way.

Now Constance ran to the room where the baby was; she was n't crying, her head was hot, she did n't want to eat, she was n't the little baby that had her bath and ate her supper and went to bed warm with the kisses of her father and mother. A limp Little Person she seemed,—a Little Person who had traveled a long distance away from those who loved her and who looked at them with eyes curiously questioning, as though to ask where she was going and what had happened.

John, meantime, had sat stolidly in the library. As Constance reappeared with her face pale,—
“Well?” he asked.

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“I think she has a little fever,” said Constance,—you try not to take it hard, you know, and you pretend to yourself that it is nothing,—“but I think we had better have the doctor.”

Then they both went in and sat beside the baby. They had done it before over little things; they told each other the things they had said when they had sat that way before,—that it was nothing, that they were foolish,—and yet this time it was different; the shadow that had passed so lightly seemed to brood heavily about them. All doctors seem to take a very long time to come; you wait for two things when you wait for a doctor,—you wait for him, first of all, to come and help your baby, and next you wait for him to come and tell you how foolish you are and that he would have no money at all in this world if he never saw a sicker child than this.

And, after all, when he did come, he had n’t anything very bad to say; it was a small matter, it might pass away in a day, not very much

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fever as yet, — but he left them looking at each other with frightened eyes and not many words to say to each other.

The lives of little children are terribly fragile things. That your baby has always been well and strong is no safeguard to it; a little puny child lives and grows up, and the strong and well one goes, it would seem, over night.

Constance slept near Louise that night, and John, after the manner of tired men, where their anxiety is not too strong, turned in and slept as men can, which is one of the boons denied to women. And now Louise slept and now she waked and looked with big eyes that questioned, and now she cried a little, and the gray morning came and she waked again, very good, lying with eyes staring patiently before her. And Constance tended her through the night, watching the symptoms grow worse, as the doctor had said they might, doing the few little things one can for a small baby, and praying and wishing, wishing from the bottom of her soul, that there was a naughty little girl there with fretfulnesses

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that one could understand, instead of this patient, silent little stranger who lay and stared or sobbed a little gently to herself.

And when John came, Constance clung to him and yet tried to seem calm, because she loved him and because she knew she had to say the words she knew he dreaded most to hear,— “Louise is worse!” For at such moments one would like to shield those one loves the most. Then, when the doctor came, he could only say,—

“I think it will be better if you have a trained nurse.” He tried to be light about it and explained that it would be better for Constance and it would take anxiety away, and that in these days one had nurses unnecessarily if one could afford them. And they pretended to believe him, each for the other’s sake; they tried to say it was nothing, that Louise was a very strong baby and that she had been perfectly well the day before yesterday, and all the things that a man and a woman say at such times without deceiving each other at all.

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Then John went to work and Constance busied herself getting things ready for the new woman who could take better care of her baby than she could herself. Nurses do not know with what passionate faith young mothers turn to them when they come into the house where such a shadow lies heavy.

And so the day wore on and nothing to do — nothing to do but sit and wait, to answer the telephone that rang from the office, to try and speak words of cheer over it, and to hold one's self square and straight toward faith, because at such times it seems to a mother that if she wavers in her own faith in the belief in life, if she admits that what she fears may happen could happen, some silver cord will be broken. Perhaps it is so. It may be that by absolute faith miracles can be worked; we know that then we must n't cry, then we must n't be afraid, that if we are brave enough we pass somehow mysteriously to the other side of sorrow into a curious calm, and that we pass for a moment from out of the shadow that is killing

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us into the light of what some people call Faith and some God ; and in that way Constance, dry-eyed, tranquilly calm, went and looked at the little quiet figure that was so unlike Louise, that was so patient, that was so weak ; and she who knew so little and had so little of the deftness of the nurse, sat there and enveloped the little weak figure with her own strength, brooding over it with the depths of her love as though those things would keep it in life.

And then there came a moment in that house when everything seemed to stand still, when every one waited,— John and Constance and the doctor and the nurse and Louise, Louise so very quiet ; and the shadow brooded deep, and then it lifted, and to John and Constance it was almost as though one could see life ebbing back, as though one could see the shadow go and the light come. And then the tension that had been among them all broke, and the doctor put his hand on John's shoulder and said,—

“ Don't you worry, old man ; we 're going to pull her through.” And John sat down in a

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chair and put his head in his hands, while Constance crowded herself close to him; and then both of them knew that there is just one thing in the world that matters to parents, and that is to have their children live in this world; nothing else counts so long as they are well,—everything else is trivial; so long as they live, all is well in the world.

VIII

THE GROWN-UP BABY

FOR the first time in her life Constance had a secret from John. Perhaps the word "secret" is n't exactly the right one. It was more that she was keeping something back from him, and as far as she could she was industriously shutting her eyes to it herself. But after all, she could n't keep her eyes shut when a thousand little things every day brought it to her so forcibly, and then as to keeping it from John, one would have supposed that although he did n't have as good a chance as Constance to observe things, he would surely have noticed it too.

The thing that Constance was keeping back from her husband was an important one,—their daughter Louise was growing up. There was no doubt about it,—growing up at an appalling rate, and yet in spite of all the manifestations to

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this effect there was John,— he had n't changed his manner to the baby, it seemed to Constance, a single bit since she began to smile. Of course he had enlarged his vocabulary slightly, but that might be that he was getting used to a baby and had got over the first bashfulness that a man naturally feels in the presence of his offspring. He did n't seem to realize that right under his very nose his baby Louise was turning into a big girl.

Take for instance the question of Louise's persistence. There was no doubt about it at all,— Louise had a mind of her own. She knew exactly what she wanted. She also knew what she did not want. She knew with a definiteness that was appalling in one so young that she did not want to cut her teeth upon a ring of any kind, whether rubber, celluloid, or ivory.

“There is something in the shape of a ring,” Constance told John, “that bores Louise.”

And John laughed,—

“The emotions that you attribute to that child, Constance!”

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Constance did not answer, being in the realms where it is impossible for a man to follow. Men are not humble enough about the matters that concern their little children. They fancy arrogantly that because they are fathers, it must follow that they know all about their children, especially in the matter of the emotions.

Constance had learned a great many things since Louise came; for one learns a great deal about the mental workings of all babies by watching one and living with it almost all the hours of the day. So she knew, even though John denied it, that rings bored Louise. Whenever one was presented to her, she would drop it over the side of her crib or her chair. I say "drop" advisedly,—she did n't throw them away, but let them fall as if casting them into the pit of oblivion. She let the one drop now which John offered her, and pointed definitely to the bureau. John brought her one thing after the other. She gave each one a little chance,—looked at it, saw it was not what she wanted, and dropped that too, with a little ris-

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ing exasperation. Grown people are very stupid sometimes, and it takes all the patience of a baby to put up with it.

At last Constance gave out, —

“ She wants the looking-glass, the little round one.”

Louise greeted this with a little squeal of delight, took it in both of her hands and shoved as much at she could of it into her mouth and bit upon its cool surface with solemn pleasure.

“ I don’t think that’s a good thing for her to play with ; she’ll spread her mouth with it, and you know, Constance, Louise’s mouth is quite large enough already.” But he knew very well it was easier to say a thing should be taken away from a baby than to do it, and wisely decided that now she had it, it would be better for her to keep it for the moment anyway.

Presently Louise took the glass from her mouth and regarded her reflection in it with undisguised approval.

“ Do you think, Constance,” asked John, “ that she is going to be vain ? ”

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“I hope so,” Constance answered shamelessly. “I never was vain enough myself. I am going to teach her to have a proper respect for her looks. The women in both our families are too careless about such things.”

John groaned in spirit.

“Well,” he said, “I hate vain women, and when you talk of teaching the child such things—”

“I did n’t say I was going to teach her to be vain,” Constance answered with smiling obstinacy. “I said I was going to teach her to have a respect for her looks.”

“It’s the same thing,” growled John.

“It’s quite different,” smiled Constance.

Louise said nothing, but looked smilingly from her father to her mother, and smiled at herself in the glass. It was not long after this that she found out that there were ever so many looking-glass babies in the house. She greeted them as she greeted the little babies who passed her in her carriage. It is touching how young babies recognize their contemporaries, and smile and signal

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to them and point them out excitedly to the big people ; and the looking-glass baby was the most responsive of all. Some babies, of course, do not answer back. You may smile at them with all grace and point a rosy finger directly at them, and they will look at you stolid and unblinking and never so much as show a gum and a tooth or two in a smile ; but the looking-glass baby was a vivacious soul. She hopped up and down in the arms of her attendant ; she pointed with abandon at her friend. Pointing is a very complimentary act for a baby ; it only gets to be rude when you are older. You can be sure that a baby who has pointed at you is not far from holding out two fluttering hands, and the next minute, like as not, will make as though to hurl herself from the arms that now hold her.

And the looking-glass baby was always ready to smile, and on doing so would display quite a number of enviably white teeth. She, too, was proud of her shoes, and when Louise would lift up her foot to show this baby, the baby would lift up her foot, too, with an equal pride, as if to

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say, "I have quite as handsome a foot and shoe as you have yourself."

Louise grew to watch for this little friend. There was a mirror in the hall in which she could see this baby every night and morning when she was carried past, and several other times in the day besides. She was always catching glimpses of her about the house, and it never failed to awaken in her a lively sense of comradeship. To Constance this spectacle was a touching one. She would hold Louise in her arms and let her talk and play with her friend for moments at a time. She knew it was the first sign that her baby would love to play with other children when she grew older, and she envied for Louise those families where a baby is born and finds herself surrounded by other little curly heads, — little folks that she realizes are like herself, — children whose gestures and smiles are so much more like her own than those of the big creatures who feed and dress one and put one to bed. For there is nothing in the world more natural for babies than to love to play

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with some one else. It is always twice as satisfying as to play alone.▼

Up in her mother's room Louise would try to play with the baby, for here was a very large looking-glass. She would creep toward it and with wavering legs draw herself to her feet by a convenient chair, and, clutching the chair firmly, would smile at the baby opposite, inviting her to come out of her house and play with her. She would even draw herself up close to this glass, which was a long pier glass, and the baby would try to come to her. They both wanted to play with each other so much, poor little things! And every day she would try to look behind the mirror to find out where it was this other child lived who shared all her thoughts and was so ready to respond to a smile.

It would be impossible to say just when Louise began to realize who her friend was. No one can ever know how little children make such discoveries. Does it just drift upon them bit by bit who the looking-glass baby is,—she who is always so near one, but who is always behind so

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hard a surface? Or does it come in a blaze of light, the way our own grown-up discoveries come sometimes?

That was one of the landmarks of Constance's life. It seemed someway to mark to her the coming out of her little girl from the sweet, enveloping mist of little babyhood. Yet John, when he was told of this remarkable discovery of Louise's, remarked that she was bound to find it out sometime,—“unless indeed,” he added, “the child was to grow up an idiot.”

He put this in a funny and humorous way and laughed over his own joke, and Constance smiled dutifully, too, as a good wife should at her husband's pleasantries. But meantime her brain was thinking, “Grow up! That was just it!” She sat there mending some garment of the baby's, brooding to herself. There seemed to be two people who talked.

“Why,” said one, “have you been so afraid of your baby's growing up? Every new thing she has done from the time she first smiled at you has delighted you, and yet you have almost

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been sorry at the same time. Don't you want your daughter to grow up?"

And Constance would answer,—

"I love every little new thing she does, every sweet way of hers I cherish, but how should I wish her to grow up? Every day she is turning into some one else; every day my little baby that I could hold so close in my arms so short a time ago is getting to be a big person."

But the other one would go on,—

"But the big 'little person' is your own just the same, so why do you mind?"

Then Constance would cry out in answer,—

"Oh, I don't know, I don't know!" And yet she did know, as all mothers do, the source of this regret. It is because the little moment of babyhood is so sweet and dear that one wants to lengthen it out, and while one teaches one's children to be big people, and repeats over words by the hour that they may say them after you, yet when they do a mother cannot but feel sorry that her little baby has walked up one more step in the ladder of life away from the tiny creature

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who has just learned to smile and to use its eyes. And while one rejoices in each new dexterity of body and mind, how can one bear to give up the dear, awkward, fluttering gestures?

Well did Constance remember the story of a friend of hers whom she had n't met for a year or two. When a little sister arrived the little boy remarked,—

“ Lay a place for my little sister at dinner to-day ; she is coming to the table.”

And when they laughed, her friend remarked ruefully,—

“ It seems to me that she actually did come to dinner and sit up in her high-chair in just about a week's time.” For this is about the span of time that your baby is a really little baby, it seems to mothers. And from that time to the time when all of the graces of little-babyhood are stripped from them and down to the tragic hour when they lose their beauty and their front teeth at one and the same moment, is incredibly short.

So you see why it was that Constance kept

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from putting into words what was happening to their daughter. It is partly because John was so blind himself; it was partly because she could n't bear to say it out loud, as though putting it into words would give it a certain sort of reality it yet lacked. Yet how could he misunderstand the significance of her toys, for the relentless weeks had snatched from Louise such things as the round mirror. That had gone its way with rattles and little celluloid balls and rubber cats. She had these things now and occasionally looked at them or played with them in a half-hearted way, but what she really cared for was her rag baby made for her by her grandmother. This rag baby was dressed in clothes that could come on and off, fully complete throughout, and Louise loved looking at all these clothes and comparing them with her own. Moreover this doll-baby had a crib, and the crib had blankets and sheets. It took at least a hundred naps a day, to Constance's certain knowledge.

Louise was n't quick at talking. Many a baby of her age had quite an extensive vocabu-

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lary; but to Constance there was something more grown-up in this care for her rag baby, this looking at clothes, this putting a baby to bed and taking it up again and pretending to feed it, than in any amount of precocious sentences repeated like a parrot.

And the little boy next door of just about Louise's age could make the most lifelike steam-car noises, and pushed a little iron train up and down the garden path all day long, choo-chooing and ding-donging away while Louise clasped to her little breast her rag baby ; and yet no one had given boy-playthings to the boy and girl-playthings to the girl ; from the multitude of things they had had showered upon them each had chosen what was most suitable to them in life, Constance reflected. And this fact stirred her strangely, for it was no longer her baby but her little girl that she must love, — her little girl who showed what a true little girl she was in a thousand ways, — by her doll and her love of adornment, her sensibility to color and to clothes.

It is a very strange and mysterious thing that

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little children who cannot yet speak, who can barely lisp forth a halting “Mamma,” must already busy themselves in miniature with their future business in life. Constance’s little girl loved her doll; she loved nothing so well as a hair-brush and a looking-glass and ribbon and then to play the game of doing her hair. It was absurd, but in its absurdity it touched at the root of life itself. God has made men and women different in this world and has implanted this difference down so deep in us that the very babies bear testimony to it. No one had taught the little boy next door to prefer cars to dolls; no one had taught Louise how to put her doll-baby to bed, and yet these little specks of humanity foreshadowed the man and the woman, though it was only a few months ago, Constance reflected, that they were still the age when mothers ask each other, “Is your baby a boy?”

But even here John’s perceptions failed. He spoke of Louise often as “Louise,” but just as often as “the baby,” in that sexless way that one refers to one’s child as “the baby.” The idea of

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“daughter” evidently hadn’t loomed large to him. His attitude of mind was more that one day he would have a daughter when “the baby” grew up; that he had a daughter already hadn’t penetrated to him. The daughter that he one day would have occupied his attention.

I do not know if the parents of all young children become so earnest in their discussions as to how a child should be brought up, and yet I rather think if they are true parents they must, for after all John and Constance were ordinary young people and yet they could get themselves worked up to a prodigious degree of excitement over the methods of bringing up Louise and the effects that certain courses of training had upon her character, while she, the author of these differences of opinion, sat and smiled and cooed adorably to first one agitated parent and then the other.

Take the question of Louise’s gullibility, for instance. That was a more pressing question, to be sure, and one more in the public eye than even the burning topic of education. Louise was gul-

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lible,—you could always fool her. By diverting her attention for a moment Constance could take away an object that was n't good for her and substitute something else, and most of the time Louise never knew the difference. It made him blush to see his wife do this. A man hates so awfully to have a comether put over him, even when it is done pleasantly,—that is, if he knows about it. This is the nature of man. There is no man living who likes to feel that he is being managed, and yet, with their arrogant ways, from all time they have forced their women into the rôle of manager. But there is naturally nothing on earth that makes a man rage more than to have something that he knows is n't good for him taken away from him and a pleasant substitute given him as if he didn't know what was happening. And yet that was the sort of game that Constance, with the most shocking lack of moral sense, was continually playing upon poor little Louise, and there was poor little innocent Louise smiling and crowing in the face of her mother's duplicity. It got on John's nerves; he put him-

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self in the baby's place ; he would have preferred to see Constance brutally take away something from the baby and let her cry it out, instead of always substituting something or diverting the child's attention.

“ Is n't it bad discipline, Constance ? ” he said. “ Does n't she think all the time that she is getting what she wants when really she is n't getting it at all ? Is n't she having the impression of having her own way ? What 's going to happen when she finds she is n't ? ”

To which Constance returned,—

“ Do you want her feelings hurt ? Do you want me to make her cry unnecessarily ? ”

To this John replied with some brutality, “ I don't call being honest with her making her cry unnecessarily.”

Now Constance loved to divert Louise's attention, and one of the reasons she did was because she used over and over again for this purpose what was known as “ the bird game,” and Louise could play it better and better, for she had an undimmed love for this game though she had

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it learned months before. Children outgrow their little baby toys with alarming rapidity ; they learn new things with a facility that is tragic, for it means that they are growing old very, very fast, but the little games they are taught they keep for a long time ; these are creative and can be embroidered upon, changed, and enlarged.

So it was that the bird game very seldom failed its purpose. It went like this : One pointed out an imaginary bird sitting upon the sofa, and this one stalked with infinite caution, having provided oneself with an imaginary salt-cellar. Not that Louise knew that she held an imaginary salt-cellar in her hand, but she went through in a gracious and clumsy fashion the little pantomime her mother had showed her. Did one catch the bird ? No ; when one clasped one's hand over it, it had escaped ; it was located somewhere else. This time, yes, one caught it and brought it to one's mother with two fat hands, and just as one opened one's hands to show one's mother, it escaped and circled round and round the room. One showed it did this by fluttering hands and

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by circling one's head. It was, as you see, a gracious and interesting game, and one played it many times a day, even when one was n't having one's attention diverted. Sometimes Constance would add new things to it, and sometimes it would be Louise, and while John could n't help but admit that Louise was an attractive object while playing this game, he grumbled.

“ Why should you bribe her ? ” he would say. “ Why should you give her your work-basket ? Why don't you take it away from her and let her meditate on the fact that work-baskets are bad for children ? ”

“ I do, lots of times,” said Constance. “ Lots and lots of times I say ‘ No, no — no, no ! ’ ”

In corroboration of her mother, Louise put up a warning finger and lisped, “ No, no — no, no ! ” then laughed joyfully at her own cleverness.

“ You see ! ” said Constance. “ Now can you watch her,” she added, “ while I go up and dress and get ready to go out ? ”

It was Sunday afternoon, the time when John

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sometimes had one of those rare half-hours alone with his child. He sat there considering how very seldom it was he was alone with her, and let her stray around the room, touching objects that she wanted to. But while she showed off, pretending to read a book upside-down, making grown-up reading-aloud noises,—it was an accomplishment she had taught herself and of which she was very proud,—suddenly her eye lit on something. John pretended to be reading himself, but he was watching Louise. The object upon which her eye had fallen with such approval was her mother's new summer hat; with a quick little look at her father to make sure that his eyes were where they should be and not on her, Louise trotted to the table. By now her legs could be definitely counted upon to carry her wherever she wanted to go,—they seldom let her fall down. She took the hat,—took it in a way that showed John she knew perfectly well she was touching something she shouldn't. With it she walked across the room to the long mirror and tried it on.

At the sight of this absurd little baby in her

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mother's flowery hat, there sprang up in John Greatrax the tenderness that a father has for his daughters, a tenderness that a man cannot give to the most beloved of sons, a thing that in a man's life is one of the most touching and beautiful experiences that life may hold. He realized what Constance had known for so long,— that this baby was a little girl, realized it to the full while at the same time he must needs laugh at the solemn little figure so pleased with itself and with the big hat.

But here Constance came into the room. With a cry of dismay she sprang forward.

“ Oh, Louise ! ” she cried. Then turning to John, “ She knows she must n't touch my hat ; she 's crazy over hats—I don't let her ! ” And she plucked the new hat from her daughter's head, repeating “ No, no ! ”

But here Louise rose to the occasion. Two could play at the game of turning the subject. She had n't had her mind taken off from things that disturbed her by the bird game for months and months for nothing ; so smiling adorably at her

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mother and with a voice full of sparkling interest, she pointed to the imaginary bird, clapping her hands together, and cried, "Oh, bird!" and went forth to catch it, with a fullness of interest as though she had never heard of hats, as though never for a moment had she contemplated the trying-on of her mother's forbidden headgear. Smiling and with dancing eyes she caught the bird and brought it to her mother and let it escape while John and Constance looked at each other. Then John himself voiced the thing that had so haunted Constance, brought it out into the open just as if it did n't matter at all.

"Constance," he said, "Louise is grown up. She is n't a baby any more, she is a grown-up little girl."



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